

The International communicator

communicating with competence

Spring 2005

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

In this issue we will be looking at, among other things, our perceptions and how they shape the way we approach people and situations.

Are you aware of your own leadership style and of the style that best suits the people working for you? (p. 2) Such awareness can make all the difference to your team dynamics.

You have probably heard that knowing the way people from other countries deal with the world can prevent costly misunderstandings. We take a look at four typical examples (p. 4).

Not clear on the path forward? If you take the long view and look back from the future goal you want to reach, you may discover that you are able to see the path to that goal more clearly (p. 3).

N Vision wishes you a clear perspective and presence of mind (p. 3) in the months ahead.

Joe Butler, Editor

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N Vision Learning

Meaningful Learning—Action Learning

Learning is only meaningful if it is applied to the real world work experience. And that's exactly what action learning does.

There is a line from the poet T. S. Eliot that skeptics could easily apply to a lot of corporate training: “We had the experience but missed the meaning.” Knowledge is gained, skills are learnt, but they often fade into the background once people get back into the daily working environment.

Action learning avoids this trap. Its design allows participants to gain both experience and meaning from the learning process.

Action learning is a very powerful approach involving participants working on real business problems while simultaneously focusing on what is being learnt and reflecting on how it is benefiting the whole team and individuals within that team.

N Vision has been using action learning for top management teams and high-potential leadership groups for two years now. One of these this year is an international group of 50 leaders and future leaders at a leading European IT company. For this group the aims are:

- to improve teamwork across business functions and countries
- to think creatively about their current business challenges
- to develop greater self-awareness and act as role-models and
- to strengthen co-operation within the whole organization.

The program is built on four face-to-face modules—one every two months. In-between, regular contact is kept through e-mail, conference calls and one-day, small-group meetings.

“Action learning allows participants to gain both experience and meaning from the learning process”

This extended contact results in a more meaningful exploration of the key issues. For example, in the first module several participants felt sure they could work in an international, remote team. Within a few weeks “people problems” had started to crop up in all of the projects. The second module gave the participants the time and space to reflect on the key phases of teambuilding and become more aware of the impact of their individuality on the team. Since then, the teams have been moving forward with their projects more effectively. They have much greater awareness, knowledge and now experience of working in an international team—thanks to action learning.

Steven Hunt



Leadership

Situational Leadership (I)

Situational leadership allows us to analyze the needs of the whole situation—both task and relationship—and then to adopt the most appropriate leadership style.

Most of us are situational leaders without really knowing it. For example, we try not to get angry with a nervous colleague on their first day. And we follow up tasks with some people more than others because we suspect they'll forget otherwise.

Leadership Style

Leadership style is defined in terms of the amount of **direction** and **support** that the leader gives to his or her followers (see grid below). **Direction** concentrates on how to do the task and is instrumental in developing competence. **Support** focuses on developing people's initiative, attitudes and feelings

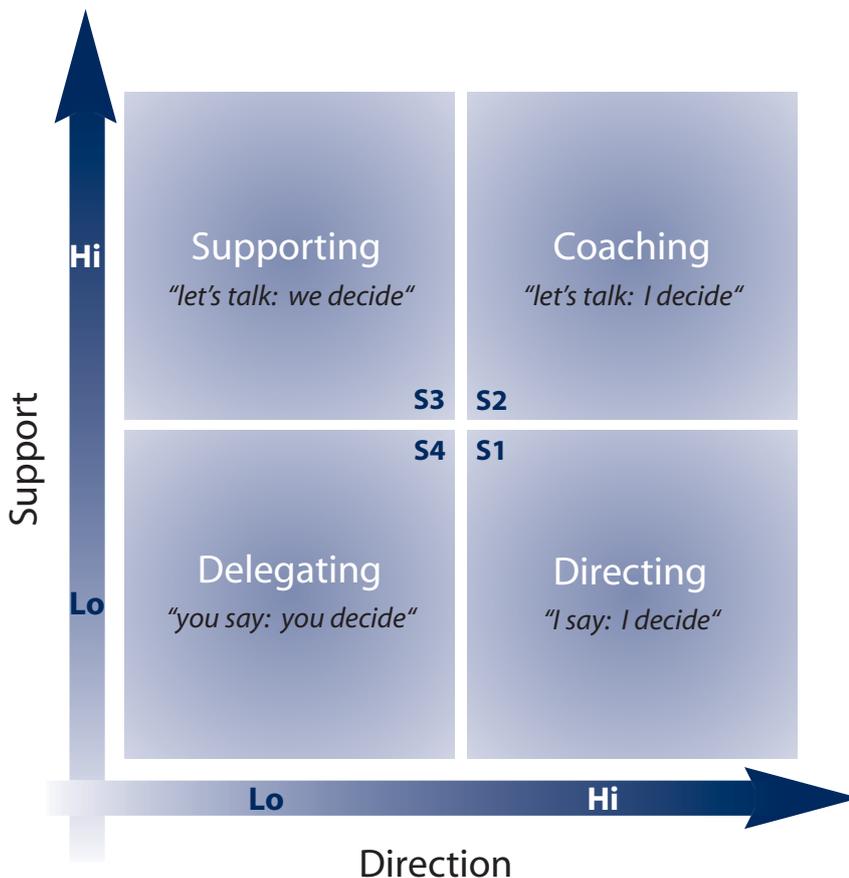
towards the task and is instrumental in developing confidence and commitment.

In all four styles the leader:

- identifies desired outcomes and ensures that goals are clear
- observes and monitors performance
- gives feedback to the individual
- invites feedback from the individual.

Truly effective leaders are versatile in being able to move around according to the situation, so there is no one right style. However, we tend to have a preferred style, and in applying situational leadership we need to know which one is right for us.

- Directing leaders** provide specific instructions about roles and goals and closely supervise performance. Decisions are made by the leader.
- Coaching leaders** explain decisions, solicit suggestions from the individual, praise behaviors that are appropriate and continue to direct task accomplishment. Final decisions are made by the leader.
- Supporting leaders** facilitate, listen, elicit ideas, encourage and support self-reliant decision making and problem solving.
- Delegating leaders** empower the individual to act independently and provide the necessary resources to get the job done. Most decisions are made by the individual.



Development Level

Clearly the appropriate leadership style will depend very much on the person being led—the follower. Every follower is at their own development level, which is defined as a combination of two factors: the competence and commitment of the follower to achieve a particular task. Development level does not apply to the person but rather to the task. An individual can be at one level of development on one task and at a different level on another task.

In the next issue of the International Communicator read how development level and leadership style interact.

Ed Norman

Reference: Paul Hersey, Kenneth H. Blanchard, Dewey E. Johnson, Management of Organizational Behavior: Leading Human Resources, 8th edition, Oct. 2000, ISBN: 0-13-017598-6

The Learning Corner

Word Watch

Thinking "Outside the Box"

Taking a look back from the future as you would like it to be will put a new perspective on problem situations.

It's the beginning of the Effective Meetings seminar I am participating in. The small talk has relaxed me a bit. I'm waiting for that opening question that they ask in every seminar. Here it comes:

"What are your objectives for this seminar?"

I take a deep breath and pause. In my mind I start looking back at what has happened over the last few months and think of the some of the things I'd like to change in our meetings.

After some reflection I answer out loud:

"I want to learn how to lead meetings better"

"I want to learn how to deal with difficult situations in meetings."

I notice that others have the same sort of answers. It's clear why we're all here, isn't it?

Actually, it's not and the chances that these objectives are realized also remain uncertain. Real change takes place when:

- We let go of our old ways of thinking.
- Deeper fundamental changes in our way of being, attitudes, approaches and mindsets take place.
- We leave our past experience and learned ways of dealing with things and jump into the same situations with a sense of something new in terms of a new feeling, state of perception, or quality of being and acting.
- We are ready to take full responsibility.

So how to state objectives and expectations so that we can begin to

embrace real change? The answer lies in the opening question. It has to be a question that doesn't follow the regular patterns of thinking, that is, of looking back to the past, but rather a question that is oriented to the future:

"At the end of this seminar, and it has been a successful seminar, what has happened?"

In this question I have to jump into the future and turn around to see what has happened. It leaves space for infinite possibilities, for something new.

I close my eyes and take a deep breath. I start to feel that moment in

"Real change takes place when we are ready to take full responsibility."

the future as I would like to have it. It feels relaxed. I feel good. There is a resonance of "knowing" exactly what I want. The answers to the question start coming:

"I feel clarity in my words, which brings clarity to the situation."

"I know what to do and say in conflict situations."

When we really bring ourselves into the state of that moment in the future, we have already entered the quality of "being" or "presence" required to start the process of real change.

And that's thinking "outside of the box."

Ieva Gaidulis

Presence

Present is from the Latin *praesens*, *-entis*, the past participle of *praesesse*, and means in essence "being there."

Do you have "presence"? When you enter a room, are people immediately aware that you are there? Do you radiate an invisible energy that permeates the space? A person who has presence is larger than life, is more than the sum of their parts.

What about "presence of mind"? Do you know that state of the mind in which all faculties are alert, prompt and acting harmoniously? The state in which you are enabled to reach, as it were, spontaneously, or by intuition, fair and just conclusions in sudden emergencies or when faced with extreme pressure? Do you know that point when all else fades away and the bare truth suddenly appears before you out of the forest of trees of possibilities?

We are bombarded constantly with millions of pieces of information. We continually process thousands of messages. We multi-task until we can multi-task no more.

Stop. Feel your presence. Concentrate on your presence of mind. "Be there." You'll discover that presence of mind can bestow on you a presence that can fill a room.

Jaquie Thomas

Numbers

Only 2% of learning executives are evaluated on their success in aligning learning programs to corporate goals.

From Accenture's 2004 survey of learning executives



Sales

Selling Internationally

In the sales situation you would expect everyone to be interested in getting the best deal. They are—but that might not be clear to all the participants if they are from different cultural backgrounds.

Although sales people around the world will generally adopt a similar approach to closing business with customers, the process can look very different depending upon the cultural context. How would you respond to these culturally influenced situations?

Establishing Rapport and Credibility

Your German customer begins asking a lot of questions about your company's financial situation. They want to know about your turnover, client base, cost structure and even your profitability. You feel that the questions have very little to do with your business proposal and you are concerned that they are trying to understand how much this sales opportunity is worth to you and so push for further financial discounts. Is this likely to be true?

Investigating and Developing Needs

You ask your Russian client some questions about the business problems they are currently facing. They begin answering your questions but then change the subject and start

Statement of Purpose

N Vision Learning Solutions designs and delivers international learning programs and consulting services that enable people to do business more enjoyably and effectively in the global marketplace.

talking about other issues that are somehow connected but basically irrelevant. Each time you gently interrupt them and bring them back to the point but you feel increasingly frustrated with the situation. Are they deliberating trying to confuse you with all these irrelevant details?

Demonstrating Capability

You are American and presenting your proposal to a German-Japanese joint venture. You don't feel

“They start talking about other issues that are irrelevant.”

that the meeting is going well at all. When the Japanese are speaking, they won't look at you and instead seem to stare at the table. When you are speaking, the Germans keep staring at you intensely and the Japanese keep staring at the table. Neither of them appears to be listening to your proposal at all. What has gone wrong?

Obtaining Commitment(s)

You have reached an agreement in principle with your Japanese customer and now you need to discuss the terms of a written contract. Your Japanese counterpart seems reluctant. Why is this? What should you do now?

Go to www.nvision-learning.com/ic/articles to find out what is going on in these situations.

Mike Cook



News

New address

For those of you who missed the news in the last issue of the *International Communicator*, N Vision Learning Solutions moved offices at the beginning of the year. We are now located at:

Franz-Joseph-Strasse 12
Das Gartenhaus
80801 Munich
Germany

Our telephone and fax numbers and our e-mail addresses remain the same:
Tel. +49 - (0)89 - 30 63 22-0
Fax +49 - (0)89 - 30 63 22-99
E-mail format:
firstname.lastname
@nvision-learning.com

We look forward to learning with you in our new offices!



Food for Thought

“We must combine the toughness of the serpent and the softness of the dove, a tough mind and a tender heart.”

—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), US civil rights leader

“Complaining about anything out of our control is not only senseless, but the negative self-talk we use to lodge the complaint has a direct effect on how we function that day—mentally and physically.”

—Dr. Shad Helmstetter, American behavioral researcher and life coaching pioneer, author and speaker