



## KEVIN LANE TURNER & TURNER LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

*Sustainable change through Training-Over-Time.*



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT | C-SUITE ADVISORY | TEAM PERFORMANCE TRAINING | TURNAROUNDS

### Winter 2019 Newsletter

#### Quotes of the Day

*"Surround yourself with great people, delegate authority, and get out of the way."*

- US President, Ronald Reagan

*"A Leader's job is to have all the questions. You have to be incredibly comfortable looking like the dumbest person in the room."*

- Former CEO of GE, Jack Welch

*"The important thing we do with managers, is to find the .400 hitters and then not tell them how to swing."*

- Warren Buffett

#### How Do Others See You?

Confirmation Bias can get you fired at worst and forgotten at best!

**Bias:** "A preconceived opinion or inclination."

**Confirmation Bias:** "The tendency to interpret, analyze, or favor information in such a way that it confirms one's pre-existing belief, opinion, or conclusion. It is a systematic error of reasoning."

During a discussion with my associate, I recently learned of an incident that occurred in the Fortune 50 company within which he was once employed. A young, new executive apparently came into his new role with "guns a-blazing." Smart, skilled, and hard-working, this fellow was being groomed for future leadership roles within the company. This favored tutelage track infused this exec with lots of confidence, too much confidence it seems, because as soon as he landed in his new role he set about leaving his footprint, or some would say his sledge hammer. He stepped into his new role believing he knew *beforehand* most everything he needed to know about the business and its key people.

Because of some rather impulsive, yet bold decisions on his part, this executive quickly became one to be feared. In the midst of a good economy and solid company performance, jobs were unceremoniously cut without grounds. Incentives were slashed for many who remained, and to compound issues, annual performance reviews of employees two and three steps removed from this new boss were changed/downgraded with the new leader's "influence". The real fallout came a few months later when the first of several lawsuits arrived at company headquarters. After a thorough internal investigation, this young HiPo was terminated for his "slash and burn" treatment of his people and the unnecessary exposure of his employer to litigation.

How did this happen? Did it have to happen? What caused this manager to act in this manner?

This young executive was blinded by a dynamic we are all susceptible to, *confirmation bias*. The sad fact is that this is not an isolated occurrence. It happens all the time in the ranks of business management (maybe not to this extreme though). And human nature dictates that confirmation bias will continue to occur. However, you can choose to not be a victim of confirmation bias, once you know how it works its way into the human psyche.

There are two fundamental styles of leadership and management, and confirmation bias often plays a large part in one of them:

1. Command & Control Leadership/Management, and
2. Confident Curiosity Leadership/Management.

And as we learn from the above story, one approach can get you fired while the other will get you promoted!

So, what are some of the symptoms of these two styles of Leadership and Management?

#### **Command & Control:**

- Initially, relies on a few select, trusted people and their views/opinions to assess the entire team and/or business landscape. This limits perspective but is typically covered up by lots of confidence or bravado.
- Lured by loyalty and familiarity with their select, trusted people, is highly susceptible to being blind to a large portion of the facts about the business and/or its people. Trust in their select confidants, by nature, limits and restricts the amount and/or type of information the confidants divulge to their leader/manager in order to protect the confidant's "favored" status with their leader/manager. (Clayton Christensen, Harvard Business School)
- Rarely if ever engages and/or interviews each and every team member during their first 3-6 months in the role in order to learn, discover, and assess the landscape.
- When they do engage others, they often already have a pre-existing belief or opinion about each person and/or their piece of the business.
- Asks questions in order to verify and prove their pre-existing belief or opinion, *not* to learn and discover.
- Arrives at their assessments and decisions within hours or days versus weeks or months.
- Are typically poor communicators, though they often believe they are great communicators – and they are, *if* communication is one-way, not two-way.

## Leaders and Managers: Does your manner of engaging others create anxiety or excitement?

*"Research shows that anxiety harms decision-making. It is a drain on cognitive resources, using up brain power and information-processing abilities, reducing confidence. Feeling anxious is associated with a threat mindset. Excitement on the other hand, causes people to perform better. When excited, people focus on opportunities, how things can go well and work out in their favor. It causes a growth mindset."*

- Harvard Business School Professor, Alison Wood Brooks

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## Confident Curiosity:

- Initially, relies on no one else's views or opinions about the business and/or its people until he/she first dives in and explores for themselves.
- Asks lots of fact-finding questions from everyone concerned during their first 3-6 months in order to gain a firm grasp of what's before them with both the business and its people.
- Asks questions to learn and discover and *then* assess (not to verify or prove a pre-existing belief or opinion) and is therefore always open to being wrong initially.
- Takes weeks and months, versus hours or days, to arrive at their assessments and decisions about the business and/or its key people.
- Because of the above four bullet points they're often mis-judged by others early on as weak or soft when in fact, they're just the opposite, strong and decisive when it counts.
- Runs their ideas by trusted advisors and/or superiors just to "check" their own thinking and conclusions.
- Typically makes very good, sound decisions regarding both the people and its business because of how they approached their discovery and "fact-finding" phase of the business and its people.
- Are typically excellent two-way communicators; they listen, hear, and invite. Then, they speak. Then they listen still more.

As you review the above two lists which camp do you fall within?

I was fortunate enough to sit under some incredibly wise men in my career. The first two were my grandfather and father. They taught me how to select, grow, and manage people during my summers harvesting their tobacco crops from ages 12 through 18. I learned a lot from those two men as I witnessed how they managed and empowered the farm's "hired hands" every summer during the summer-long, 6-day work weeks of the harvest season. I then took those principles and applied them to my first management position soon after college. Managing an electronics and appliance store, what would be considered as a Best Buy type of store today, our team operated a store that was in the smallest demographic of all the company's stores on the East Coast as well as the smallest store in volume. Within 18 months our team took that store from the bottom of all the stores to #1. That was a glorious day!

Witnessing the power of empowering people and wanting more for myself, I then took those same concepts of people and business management that I learned from my grandfather and father and started my own company. Our team rapidly grew that little business into a solid, much larger company and within 3 years was given an offer to sell that I could not refuse.

What's the lesson here? When you bridle your *pre-existing* beliefs and opinions about the business and/or its people (*Confirmation Bias*), and you take the time to first discover who your people are (their strengths, their weakness, what they like, what they don't like, and what motivates them) you then find that you can *get average people to give above average efforts and produce above average results*. And when you're fortunate enough to add a few all-stars to the ranks, some very special things can happen within your business.

This really isn't rocket science. It's what my Grandfather and Father used to repeatedly tell me, "*It's common sense, Kevin. Treat the people right and manage the business properly, and the money will take care of itself.*" And in the end, everybody wins!

So, how do you want to be remembered?

Will people talk for years about the great numbers you produced or will they talk about the great people you produced?

## What Others Say:

Does our system work long-term? Yes, it does, and here is one of many who've attested to it over the years. Mary was stricken with depression and on medication. Her mother saw Kevin on a National television interview and called our offices the next day requesting his help. Being out of state, Kevin conducted all of Mary's sessions by phone. After her sessions concluded, Kevin finally met Mary face-to-face when she flew to Dallas just to meet with and thank Kevin.

The below email was sent from Mary 14 years ago (9 years after her sessions), and she's still doing great today. The system works!

July 27, 2005

"Hi Kevin,

*Hope this finds you doing well and still helping people.*

*Recently I picked up the notebook I kept during our talks over the phone. If you remember correctly, when I began our conversations my son was 18 months old. He is now ten.*

*Since I finished your coaching, I have been depression-free and gainfully employed!*

*Thank you again for the Bible-based, straight-ahead, right on advice you gave me.*

It lasts!!!"

- Mary Bingham