Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive

28 Tru Tips for Developing the Leader in You

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive

About Scott:

Scott is an experienced learning executive, trainer, coach, and a published author. His experience includes leadership roles in the manufacturing, financial, and healthcare industries. He has directed people and change strategies for startup, as well as multinational organizations.

Scott is passionate about building the culture and process within organizations that result in people being engaged and excited about what they are doing each day, and the business results that follow. The wide spectrum of industries in which Scott has worked brings a balanced perspective when brainstorming ways to help clients/partners.

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What I am hearing

Your best people are more likely to be worried about their jobs than they were four years ago. Your worst performers are actually feeling safer. In a recently published survey, HR Solutions found that 14% of actively engaged employees (your best, or people you consider high potentials/high performers) were worried about job loss. This number was 6% four years ago. They also found that only 21% of actively disengaged employees (non-performers, or those who do just enough or cleverly hide in the pack) were worried about their job vs. 41% four years ago.

What it means

The impact of layoffs, budget cutting, and the constant efficiency improving slogans like "do more with less" have had an impact on both high performers and non-performers. In talking with workers and executives alike, I often hear both using the sentence "grateful to have a job." Individuals are glad to be employed. Given the challenges with this economy, it is comforting to think that retention is a non-issue.

What these numbers indicate is that your best people, the people you depend on for the new products, new customers, new ideas… are unsettled. Not all of them, but 14% of them.

The question for you: Can you afford to lose any of your best people? Your best people likely have other choices for employment today, and as the economy improves they will have even more choices.

What you should do

Here is a basic exercise to do at your next executive team meeting. It will take twenty minutes.

- Have each person list the people that are the highest performers on their team.
- Next, for each person on the list, answer the following two questions:
    1. Have you given this individual any sort of praise in the last seven days? (Yes or No)
    2. Have you sat down, one on one, and talked with them about their performance and what they need in the last sixty days? (Yes or No)

- Have each person share the list of names with the group. Then, as a group, talk about what can be done to make sure these people know their value to the organization and are excited about what they are doing.

Uncertain about the ability or comfort level of your team to have these conversations with their people? Uncertain about what to do next? I know what to do!

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Economic Crisis Is a Chance for Improvement

What I am hearing

Early in the Obama presidency, this quote from his chief of staff hit the airway: "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste." Far from the politics of Washington, I heard the same quote from a senior HR executive, who had received it from his CEO. This organization sees the current economy as an opportunity to do things differently, to challenge their organization to perform at a higher level. They know their best people—the people who want to learn and be involved in getting the business through the crisis—would answer the challenge. They see an opportunity to implement changes and to develop future leaders.

What it means

There are people in every crowd who roll their eyes when a CEO stands up and issues a challenge to make personal and organizational changes. Your future leaders, the high potential members of your organization, don't roll their eyes. For them, even in these times, it is not about money. It is about being in the middle of things, having input in a problem, and being asked to do more.

In his book, "*What Got You Here Won't Get You There*," Marshall Goldsmith asked two hundred high potentials this question: "If you stay in this company, why are you going to stay?" The three top answers were:

1. "I am finding meaning and happiness now. The work is exciting and I love what I am doing."
2. "I like the people. They are my friends. This feels like a team. It feels like a family. I could make more money working with other people, but I don't want to leave the people here."
3. "I can follow my dreams. This organization is giving me a chance to do what I really want to do in life."

They want meaning in their work. They want to be part of a team working on something significant. They want to be challenged by something that excites them. For them, a crisis is an opportunity.

What you should do

Are your best people working on your biggest problems or opportunities? Here is a simple way to check—either alone or with your team.

1. Make a list of your high potentials down the left hand side of a piece of paper or a whiteboard.
2. Across the top of that same paper/whiteboard, list three to five of the biggest problems/opportunities for your business.
3. Now, for each person listed on the left, go across and put a check under which problem/opportunity they are directly working with your senior leadership on solving.

Ask yourself, "Are your high potentials working on your highest impact projects?"

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Having Clear Expectations Yields Better Results

What I am hearing

I had a conversation with someone who has trained thousands of people over the past decade, and she shared something that surprised me. Based on an evaluation they give every learner, 70% of the people in their classes do not have a clear reason WHY they are there. Having a clear reason for attending means someone has explained why they are attending the training, what to expect in the class, and what the expectations will be when they return to their job.

What it means

The recipe for developing people is simple. First, provide a clear idea of the goal or performance objective. Add to that an open and honest discussion about how someone is performing today and where he or she needs to be performing in the future. Finally, determine what the person needs to do to close that gap in performance. This core conversation is simple, but very difficult to do.

As leaders, we are not taking the time to ask a few simple questions or have the conversations that would make answers to these questions clear to our people.

Remember the Gallup research that resulted in the Q12? The top two questions to gauge employee engagement and business success are:

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.

What you should do

My fourth pillar of becoming a successful leader is to Build Habits. Being extremely busy is a valid barrier, but not a valid excuse if you want your people engaged and learning. The habits of having annual performance reviews and routine one-on-ones, when done effectively, will set people up to be part of the 30% that come to training with a clear idea of what they need. It does not take a good process for a manager to be good at doing this.

If a manager understands this, they will be successful whether they have a great process/form or not. However, to do this well as a total organization requires good processes and a culture where leaders are expected to and rewarded for doing it well.

To test your own organization's ability and culture, ask for two things:

1. Ten evaluations from people who recently went to class.
2. The most recent performance evaluation from those ten people.

Now answer the question for yourself: What percentage of people had a clear idea of why they were going to training? (Realize that the next question is, "What difference did it make in their performance?" Feel free to ask that one too!)

Do you need to build a culture around this, or build a better process? Do you have a limited budget for training, and do you want to make sure it is being focused on the key performers in your business who you see as your next leaders? I know what to do!

What I am hearing

I have heard a similar comment or question from several leaders recently. Do any of these statements sound familiar?

- "When I am gone, they just don't show the ability to make decisions I expect from leaders."
- "I told them exactly what I expect—why don't they get it?"
- "What I would like to see out of the managers in this organization in the next year is more accountability."

Three different leaders. Three different organizations. Three different industries. Are any of these statements fresh in your mind?

What it means

There is one common theme to the companies I mention above—scarcity of time/resources caused by growth or cutbacks because of the economy. As a leader, you have spent a lot of time in the last twenty-four months making some tough decisions. As a coach, when I hear one of the above statements, my first response is, "What is your part in this situation?"

Two things are almost a constant in any organization in which I have consulted or worked:

- In normal times we tend to think everyone around us thinks, works, and is motivated like us. Under stress, it gets worse.
- We are great at communication.

In a recent study by Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer published in Harvard Business Review, the authors asked leaders and workers questions to understand the number-one motivator of workers. The leaders said the number-one answer would be **recognition for good work** (either public or private). When asked the same questions, workers had a different answer: **making progress**. People want to get things done, and completing work motivates them. More often than not, we do not understand what our people need. The first question we need to ask ourselves as leaders is, "What role am I playing in assisting or impeding their progress?"

What you should do

In his book "Death by Meeting," Patrick Lencioni talks about how learning needs to be part of every executive team meeting. At your next leadership team meeting, take a copy of the article "What Really Motivates Workers" by Amabile & Kramer, have everyone read it, and ask the following questions:

- What habits do we have as leaders to make sure that people know what is important and are getting the support and resources to complete them?
- What do you need to complete in the next two weeks? What can I do to help?

Write answers on paper or a whiteboard to review at the next meeting.

Uncertain about how to have this conversation or how to make some of these habits part of your culture? I know what to do!

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Maintain Peer Relationships To Avoid Leadership Loneliness

What I am hearing

I had the opportunity to share a cup of coffee with two very successful leaders—one a CEO/entrepreneur and the other a senior pastor. As they shared their challenges, a common point emerged: "Leaders have to make decisions and live with the results." As we talked about living with the results, one key point emerged:

Leadership can be lonely.

- There are lots of risks in the big decisions that could have a huge impact on the organization.
- It often gets personal: people objecting to or arguing the decision. Personal attacks on the leader (you) by people outside of the decision making loop. (Ask a pastor about this one!)

Does this sound familiar?

What it means

Gallup did a study that found people who had three close friends at work were 96% more likely to be extremely satisfied with their lives. I never read in their results the caveat "except for CEO's or executives." You may feel different, but you are not.

A common thing I hear from people who move into leadership roles, especially into senior leadership roles, is that it is "more lonely than I thought it would be." What is the impact of this on performance? Michael Watkins, an expert in leadership transitions, did a survey that found that 40% of external leadership hires for organizations fail within eighteen months at an average cost of ten times their salary. What are some of the costs you have experienced in promoting or hiring people who did not work out? What has been the personal cost to you?

What you should do

This message is for you as a leader.

- Get a small network (three to five people) of peers—one where you share ideas/frustrations, get advice, and are reminded that others have bigger problems than you (seriously!). If you are CEO, this network should be outside the organization.
- Become an expert at 1) finding a positive outlet for stress (it is part of your job and it is not going away), 2) taking time twice a year (in addition to your vacations) to get away from the office to recalibrate your personal and professional priorities and to reenergize.

- Make sure your team is practicing the same principles. Do you really want your executive team making decisions from a place of loneliness, fear, or insecurity? Will your newly-hired VP be more productive if s/he is feeling lonely or s/he has one or two friends to openly share frustrations with or get advice from?

Uncertain about how to make any of these happen for you or your team? I know what to do!

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Success Is Achieved When You Focus on Building Trust

What I am hearing

I make it a habit to see interesting people speak as often as I can. It's a great way to observe a professional at work and learn a few things in the process. Recently, I attended a speech by Greg Mortenson, the author of "*Three Cups of Tea*" (a must-read, by the way), and I left with an interesting piece of information. Greg was telling the story of the first time he met General David Patreaus, who had just read his book (because his wife made him). The general met him and quickly gave him a summary of his book in three bullet points. After reading the book, the general observed that the keys to success in Afghanistan consist of:

- Listening more
- Respecting the people
- Building relationships

This book has since become required reading for Patreaus' staff and many other parts of the military and government.

What it means

It's great to see a leader open up to new ways of thinking when faced with a difficult problem. It was his wife's idea, but Patreaus made the decision to keep an open mind and follow her advice. What hits me about this lesson is that these three bullet points are nothing new—they're well-established concepts. Regardless of the situation, successfully doing these things builds TRUST. How often do we, as leaders, go into new situations through a merger, promotion, new job, or special project and have to learn this lesson the hard way? What if we always went into new situations with these three bullets in our sights? I think of how expensive re-learning this lesson is:

- To the leaders we hire from outside our organization who fail in their new roles (40%+ is the number).
- To CEOs trying to execute a successful merger or acquisition that is struggling because of challenges integrating leadership or culture.
- To baby boomers trying to lead millennials—or vice versa.
- To a high-potential individual trying to build a reputation and career through a tough assignment that requires working through others.

The list goes on...

What you should do

First, pick a transition happening at your organization, such as hiring a new leader, acquiring a new business, setting up a partnership, reorganizing a group, or moving into a new market. Second, ask yourself or your team, "How well are we doing these three things?" and "What purposeful things could we be doing to make sure we are building trust through our actions?" Finally, act on what you come up with and keep revisiting these questions throughout the process.

Not sure how to ask these questions or follow up on the answers? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

This tip includes a five-minute video to take a deeper dive into this topic. Read on...

What I am hearing

Do you have someone on your team who drains your energy because he or she isn't performing well? An executive shared a great story with me recently. He had a long-time employee whose role had grown, and she was no longer performing at an acceptable level. He met with her and they agreed to explore why, so he handed her the book *"StrengthsFinder 2.0"* by Tom Rath and had her take the assessment. In their follow-up meeting to discuss the results and their implications, she had an "Aha!" moment: "I'm in the wrong role." They discussed the right role, found that role, and moved her.

What it means

Too often, it's easier to let an employee go than to redeploy that person in a role where s/he clearly could be more productive. When I hear someone tell me a story of a legitimate redeployment or a rehire of a great person whom they let get away for whatever reason, I stop and listen, because it takes a special leader and a special organization to do that. These are leaders and organizations that we can learn a lot from.

What you should do

In order to do anything with a person who is not performing well, you have to be willing to have a tough discussion with that employee, and be willing to listen.

What you should not do is...

- Spend hours with every employee who is under-performing.

Start by asking yourself if this person has demonstrated a positive attitude and commitment to the organization. Is s/he someone you want to have around? If the answer is "No" or "Not really," then follow whatever process you have, but make plans to move the employee out of your organization.

If the answer is "Yes," then commit six to eight weeks to help the employee explore his/her talents, passions, and what s/he wants or needs to get from a job. Some basic steps might look like this:

1. Give the employee a copy of *"StrengthsFinder 2.0"* by Tom Rath and the *Harvard Business Review* article "Managing Oneself" by Peter Drucker.
2. Have a discussion with the employee focused on answering the questions, "How would you describe the work situation when you're at your best?" and "What are you doing when you're at your best?"
3. Spend a few meetings exploring these questions.
4. Then, together, answer the questions, "Does a role that fits what you do best exist here, or could it exist here?" and "What changes can we make to your current role to make it better fit your gifts?"
5. As a leader, help the employee identify options and coach him/her through a decision.

To supplement this material, I've made available a five-minute video on YouTube. Just go to www.youtube.com and search for "Scott Patchin trU Tips #7." Need help navigating either outcome I just mentioned? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Evaluate "B players" and Challenge Them To Do More

What I am hearing

A friend and mentor sent me this comment/question "You have given advice on how to handle the strongest and weakest performers on a team, but what about the B players?"

What it means

First, let's quickly define who the B players are: they're the people who get the work done, have limited aspirations or potential to move higher in the organization, and likely have a nickname with an adjective like "Steady Eddy," "Reliable Ruth," or "Dependable Dave." Having these people around is priceless yet frustrating, because they do their jobs but often aren't looking for more work.

We hide people in this category, so just saying "B player" is often misleading. A client described a person on his team who was solid, knowledgeable, and dependable—and everyone in the office was afraid of her (including her boss) because she was also domineering and abrasive. Yet she was a solid performer in his eyes. We HIDE too many people in the B area because they are "valuable" or "knowledgeable," all while creating fear in peers and negatively impacting the team. So I would expand the definition of "B player" into three categories:

- **B-PLUS:** Content in their current roles but willing to share their vast knowledge to mentor new people. They contribute to teams looking to innovate and optimize what work is being done.
- **B:** Solid contributors who are not interested in or capable of growing others at this point in their careers. They generally build positive relationships with teammates and consistently get things done.
- **B-MINUS:** Solid to exceptional contributors who get the work done but build few, if any, positive relationships with people around them. They do not cultivate expertise in the group, but give direction instead.

What you should do

People need to hear the truth, and the performance evaluation process is the perfect place to challenge B players—who likely comprise 50 to 60% of your workforce—but in a different way than you would A or C players. Don't rewrite your form, but include the following items as post-it addendums if needed:

- Three to five things you see them doing extremely well.
- A list of adjectives that come to mind when thinking about what they accomplish, but also how they accomplish it. Include words that describe how others perceive them.
- One request, in the form of a goal, that they could accomplish that would help the overall strength of the team: mentoring, permanently fixing a process, cultivating a key customer relationship, etc.

That third item can provide you with an opportunity to divide your B players up a little and challenge them to move the team forward.

B and B-PLUS players have a place on the team. They have ideas and may respond to challenges in a way that will surprise you. Those who fall into the B-MINUS category have to be put on notice, and as the leader you need to be bold enough to have that conversation.

Would getting more out of your B players make an impact on your business? I know what to do!

What I am hearing

Forming teams is not a new concept. However, it can be a new experience for many entrepreneurial organizations entering their next phase of growth, and for industries such as financial services. Teams can help raise revenue, keep relationships connected with service, and reduce the risk of having one person dictate the success of the organization. While the process of team building is simple, doing it effectively is a bigger challenge when the people being asked to join a team are successful largely because of their individual drives.

What it means

"There is no 'I' in team." Great slogan, but it's wrong. When bringing people together who have been successful largely because of their personal drives to succeed, there has to be room for "I" somewhere, or the team won't work. It's unrealistic to ask someone—a top sales person, a driving entrepreneur, a teacher—who has basically worked independently for the first decade of his or her career to change overnight and become a great team member. Bringing independent-minded people together requires an open and honest conversation focused on defining both individual needs and team goals, then deciding if a balance can be achieved.

Building trust is the basic component of performance. In my experience, trust comes before the other three pieces in a four-step process I call **trUPerformance™:** build trust, build focus, build confidence, and build rhythm. While the last three parts are essential for a great, high-functioning team, trust is the key. Allowing people to process through their individual needs, as well as those of the team as a whole, will promote an understanding of how the team can meet its overall goals while allowing its members to have their own needs met. In the end, individuals might decide that being part of a team won't work for them. Sharing truth allows for good choices to be made.

What you should do

The key in all of this is having a series of conversations with potential team members to identify:

1. A list of what they bring to the team, including strengths and weaknesses
2. A list of things they want or need from the team
3. A list of personal reasons for joining the team, including what they see as the group's goals or potential

Process these pieces by sharing openly, identifying common themes in both individual needs and team goals. Challenge people to identify needs that are purely "Me" goals (e.g. keeping one's top twenty clients) and those that are "We" goals that benefit the entire team (e.g. offering a more complete service solution to customers). By systematically going through these conversations, it will become evident whether or not potential team members are compatible, and whether joining the team is the right move for an individual.

Need a partner in effectively forming a team that will have a huge impact on your business? I know what to do!

What I am hearing

A friend posed this question to me: "In this new virtual world, how does the role of the leader change?"

What it means

Leading people in situations where information and decisions flow around you is challenging. It could be creating a blog or an online community to bring people together around a common interest or goal (in other words, form a team). In these situations participation is voluntary.

Seth Godin writes about this in his book "Tribes," saying, "Great leaders create movements by inspiring the Tribe (i.e. Team) to communicate." Godin's challenge to lead in a tribe is very similar to the servant leadership idea that has been around for a couple of decades. While Godin is writing about a virtual community, it mirrors the reasons Peter Drucker often shared that promoted the value of leading in a not-for-profit situation as a development opportunity for any leader. Leading in

situations where people have to want to follow you because they don't have to requires a leader to lead differently.

The bottom line is that all teams need leaders. Whether virtual or face-to-face, teams need goals, guidelines, and overall accountability to be successful. However, leading in a virtual situation will expose people who have to lead through control and direct authority. They will be found out quickly and painfully because of their lack of passion for enabling, giving, and listening.

The online world is bringing back the servant leader model in another form. The concept is that people will not follow or work as hard for leaders that do not possess the relational capacity to connect with their people. Generation Y/Millennials entering the workforce make this skill even more critical for leaders. If you are interested in exploring the connection, read "The Servant" by James Hunter and "Tribes" by Seth Godin. In leadership literature there are few new ideas, only new approaches.

What you should do

Make a list of all your leaders (direct reports) and your future leaders (high potentials). Identify five to six characteristics/skills you feel are important for leaders to possess at your organization. If building positive relationships with staff at all levels is not on your list, add it. Rate each person based on your leadership criteria using the terms strength, skilled, weakness, or unsure.

Explore your data by asking yourself these three questions:

- What skill jumps out?
- Is anyone *not* showing strength in building positive relationships?
- How would I be rated?

Looking for a partner to help connect your business goals with your operational or strategic plans for your business? I know what to do!

What I am hearing

Time goes by quickly when you're running a business. Below is a three-minute exercise you can use to assess how well you're doing with key habits for managing your people (AKA "talent"). Fill in the circle next to each item that you're doing or that you know for sure are happening. If there's an item you're accomplishing some of the time, give yourself partial credit by filling in the bottom half of the circle.

1. **Key Habits for Managing Talent**
   - O I delivered all of the evaluations on time.
   - O I have one-on-one discussions with each member of my staff at least once a month.

   - O I have reviewed all the evaluations of my team's staff.
   - O Each person on my team has a development plan.

2. **Key Habits for Managing Most Valuable People and Roles**
   - O I have a list of key people whom we cannot afford to lose and:

   - O I have checked in with them in the last month to see how they're doing.
   - O I have written development plans for them.

   - O I have a list of the key roles in my company and:
       - O I have a performance/potential chart for people currently in each role.
       - O I have a list of candidates in case of openings in these roles.

   - O I have a list of high potentials for promotion and we have spoken with each person on the list within the last six months about his/her future.

3. **Key Actions for Providing Focus To The Team**
   - O My team has plan for this year and everyone can name the top three to five priorities.
   - O The whole team reviews the progress to our yearly goals each month.

   - O We hit our goals last year.

EXTRA questions (Rate from 1, "strongly disagree." To 5, "strongly agree.")

_____ I have been very satisfied with the quality of the people we hired and promoted this past year.
_____ I see my team leading and resolving conflicts without my help.
_____ I am confident that we will hit our key goals for the coming year.
_____ I have someone on my team who should not be there because they are not contributing at an acceptable level.

What you should do

So how do you think you are doing? As a rule, if you have checked everything above the line in each of the three sections above, you're at least doing the basics. The items below the line are for organizations looking to excel in this area because of their concern for business growth and culture. If you want to learn more about how to apply this self-check to your business, view my follow-up video by going to www.thetrugroup.com and following the link to a video entitled "trU Tips #11 – Yearly Talent Check-up: Interpreting the Results."

What I am hearing

"People just don't know how to follow anymore. If I were going to teach something today, it would be how to be a good follower." These words were spoken by a friend several years ago and have been ringing in my ears ever since.

What it means

We have a word for what leaders do: "leadership." For followers, there are many labels: "associates," "partners," "worker bees," "cast members," "employees," "people", "teammates"… Take your pick. Leaving such labels alone, I would offer a word for what all of these people do: *"followership."* In a world where leaders change regularly and flatter organizations ask leaders to manage a dozen or more people, being able to follow well is critical.

Leadership development too often falls solely on the leader, with no emphasis on bringing the people they lead into the discussion. A good example is performance evaluations. There's training for leaders on how to write them, but where's the training for followers on how to manage themselves in the process? After more than a decade, I'm still searching…

What is *"followership?"* In his book, "*Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap… and Others Don't,"* Jim Collins offers five levels of leadership: 1) Highly Capable Individual; 2) Contributing Team Member; 3) Competent Manager; 4) Effective Leader; and 5) Level-5 Executive.

Similarly, I would offer five levels of *followership:* 1) Minimizer; 2) Doer; 3) Attractor; 4) Improver; and 5) Influencer. For descriptions, take a look at my blog post.

What you should do

As a leader, to have committed and focused followers, you need to do three things:

1. Make their roles and goals crystal-clear.
2. Provide the tools they need to be successful.
3. Allow them space to do and learn more, supporting them in success or failure.

Here are two techniques:

Ongoing one-on-ones: Turn ownership over to your people and provide time to hear their priorities and share yours. Are you are both on the same page? Finish by asking what they need and follow-up on any commitments you make (*addresses #1 and #3).*

New Team Members: Be purposeful about setting them up to succeed. Share things like your preferred communication method(s); when it's okay to interrupt you; how they'll know whether you're stressed, irritated, or open to debate; what irritates you; how much trust they'll have from the get-go, and how they can earn—or lose—more trust (*addresses #2).*

The funny thing about great *followership* is that, when it's done well, it looks like great *leadership.*

Need more ideas on cultivating followership in your team? Watch my video on YouTube called *"Turning Followership into Leadership,"* or subscribe to my blog at www.thetrugroup.com.

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

What I am hearing

"I'm unsatisfied with my performance evaluation process."

What it means

There are three mistakes I see most often with regard to evaluations:

1. **We stop doing them because there is no money for wage increases.** This also includes the attitude, "I'm too busy to do it." There's lots of research to refute the idea that money alone motivates people. LOTS!

2. **We blame the form.** This is another way of putting the burden on HR to fix something. If leaders and followers understand the process, the form might be a burden, but it's not a barrier.

3. **We're not training leaders and followers.** Few organizations train both parties in the performance conversation. By training, I mean going beyond basic tenets of the job, such as, *"Here is how you use the software."*

Remember the Q12 from the Gallup research? The two things people need to be able to say the most are, "I know what is expected of me at work" and "I have the tools to do my job." Performance conversations address these questions.

A second key point is that people have to get by the *"What's my increase?"* question, trust enough to share what they need, be willing to listen to the feedback, and own the action plan. (Read trU Tips 11 on Followership.)

What you should do

First, change the name to "Performance Conversation." Evaluations are things we give to people; conversations are something we share with people.

Second, I have put a solution on my website that shows you examples of:

- Directions for the leader and reviewee
- Feedback form for the reviewee
- Basic form for the conversation

Compare the conversation framework I provide to your solution. Ask yourself, "How much talking is happening in your form?" and "Who owns the action plan?"

The performance conversation is a key habit for making the most of the talent on your team.

Looking for help in establishing great performance conversations with everyone on your team? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

What I am hearing

What is resilience? I start the conversation with a formula:

HOPE > fear + anger + despair + frustration + worry + hunger + mistrust + _____ (fill in the blank)

Resilience is the ability to gather and generate HOPE to make this equation true when life happens and the right side of the equation threatens to dominate.

What it means

In a slow recovery, the resilience of your people will become more important than cash. Cash flow is measureable and has gotten plenty of attention. Worrying about and managing cash has done two things: It has pulled leaders back into day-to-day operations, and it has delayed one of the key resilience-building activities: one-on-one conversations with people about their jobs (performance evaluations) and their lives (friendship).

A recent *Harvard Business Review* report outlined a $145 million initiative to help soldiers develop their resilience. While a business environment doesn't test the resilience of an individual like warfare, there's a lot we can learn from this effort.

What you should do

As a leader, be purposeful about NOT feeding the right side of the equation.

Change management: Poor communication or slow communication during change feeds the right side. There are lots of reasons for people to be nervous, afraid, etc. Don't add to it by being silent during change.

Take care of yourself: Tired and stressed-out leaders move people to the right side. When you look like the right side is winning, your people's moods will follow you. Find activities like exercise, time with your spouse, peer friendships, faith practices, vacations, and other things that will keep your equation balanced.

As a leader, be purposeful about building HOPE.

Keep challenging your best people: One leader I spoke with rotated jobs for key people to cross-train them in other areas, preparing them as leaders for the time when business comes back and they are overwhelmed with work. Such a move feeds HOPE! Make a list of your five most valuable people and make a habit of connecting with them once or twice a month.

Create development plans for all your people: Pose questions such as the following: What do you want to be doing in three to five years? What do you want to learn this year that is outside of your current role? On a scale of one to ten, what is your energy level at work right now? What can I do to increase that level by two points?

Looking for ways to build the resilience of your leaders and your team? Would a resilience-growth strategy be a good complement to your cash-flow strategy? I know what to do!

Hear more about resilience by going to YouTube and searching for the video called "trU Tips #14 – Scott Patchin on Resilience."

What I am hearing

We do not have development plans in place for our people. How will that impact our business?

What it means

Remember what people need. The top three questions of the Gallup Q12 Index employee-engagement survey are:

- Do you know what is expected of you at work?
- Do you have the materials and equipment to do your work right?
- Do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?

Development plans provide tools to address the dynamic nature of jobs and the need to continually build skills and revisit job priorities. Think of all the factors that have impacted what people do in their jobs at your business, such as:

- Positions go unfilled, so the team picks up the work.
- Positions are eliminated and tasks are absorbed by the team.
- Processes are made more efficient, which alters jobs and requires people to learn new skills.

A solid development plan is the fundamental tool for reseting job expectations, allowing an individual the chance to share with a leader the things he or she needs to be successful, and giving both leaders and followers an opportunity to hit pause on their work for thirty minutes per quarter to review and refine the key pieces of performance.

What you should do

I created a Talent Scorecard™ for individual leaders to assess whether they're doing the basics and to get some feedback on how they can improve their own performance with regard to managing their talent. Development plans are a key piece of talent management, but only one piece. So here are two key next steps:

Step 1: Go to www.thetrugroup.com/score-card and fill out the Talent Scorecard™.

It will provide you, as a leader, with an answer to the question, "How are my basic habits for developing the talent on my team, and where do I need to improve?"

Step 2: If evaluations and/or development come up as areas where you need to increase focus, use one or both of the free templates on my website at www.thetru-group.com/resources/talent-management-resources/:

- Performance Conversation (including a Follower Feedback form)
- Development Plan

Looking to put some great development plans in place? Is it time to rebuild some of the habits or culture around investing in your people? Did the talent scorecard reveal a surprising gap for you? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

trU tip 16
Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Invest in Productive One-on-One Conversations

What I am hearing

A question I've been hearing: "How do I make the best use of limited time to meet with my people to help achieve all the things presented in **trUPerformance™**?

What it means

This conversation builds on what we discussed in trU Tips 15. The reality is that time limitations present leaders with a barrier and an excuse for not meeting one-on-one with their people at least once a month. In considering the value of this commitment to the team, leaders should ask themselves the questions: "How much time do I spend monthly dealing with questions or problems my team should be solving, or fixing something that I should have known about earlier? Would spending thirty minutes per team member provide an ROI if 80% of these time wasters were eliminated?"

The Ken Blanchard Companies did a study to determine what people thought were the critical factors for a great work environment and who was responsible for each factor: "myself, my leader, or senior leadership." The only two things given overwhelm-ing responsibility (80% or more) to "my leader" were giving feedback and setting performance expectations. In addition, the respondents identified "myself" as having primary responsibility for connectedness with their leaders and colleagues.

Their feedback to leaders was, "help me with the target, give me feedback along the way, and I will own keeping you in the loop and working with my colleagues to get things done."

For a leader, the key tool for living up to this responsibility is devoting time to one-on-one conversations and making that time the most productive meeting on your calendar.

What you should do

If you do one thing differently in the coming year, commit to twenty to thirty uninter-rupted minutes with each team member at least once a month. There are two keys to making this work:

1. The content is owned by the team member, not the leader. If you have lots to talk about (such as a new project or his/her input on your problem), schedule another meeting.

2. Provide a baseline of information about what his/her job is, how YOU measure his/her performance, and what you want to be warned about on a day-to-day basis.

If you're looking for a place to start, here's a link to a template on my website: http://www.thetrugroup.com/wp-content/up-loads/2011/11/trUPerformance-One-on-One-Sheet-Template.pdf

Feel free to print and use it. I also would be happy to send you a modifiable copy.

Looking to create this habit across a group of leaders? Is it time to rebuild some of the habits or culture around investing in your people? I know what to do!

What I am hearing

"How can I possibly have time to do evaluations and one-on-ones, address future people needs in my business, and focus on the development of my people? I know it's important, but I have so much to do!"

What it means

I asked a group of human resource professionals what would be the number-one reason their leaders gave for not doing one-on-one discussions, performance evaluations, or succession planning. The answer—and it is *always* the answer—was time.

All the research says that spending time with people to help them focus is *the* most valuable investment a leader can make. Gallup proves this in their Q12 Index employee-engagement research, with the top two questions focusing on whether people (a) know what is expected of them at work and (b) have the tools needed to do their jobs.

More recently, a Ken Blanchard Companies/ *Training* magazine study found that 80% of respondents identified setting performance expectations as the key job factor owned by their direct leaders.

The research is crystal clear regarding what people need to be at their best and how engaging them fully will have a positive financial impact on a business. But, in the trenches of leading a business, there's this barrier called "time."

What if I told you that this could be accomplished with a 10-hour-per-person commitment each year?

What you should do

Everyone needs a target, so here's one for you in terms of what you need to do and when. I call it the **trUPerformance™ Talent Calendar**. It is this simple. It's also difficult to do, because starting means changing some habits and learning to make this a priority. It consists of three key habits to perform with each of your people: monthly one-on-ones, annual performance conversations, and midyear check-ins. For a more strategic look at your people, another key event to include is a yearly key role/key people discussion.

The Talent Calendar gives any size business the tools to focus on the most important asset in that business—its people. It makes the time commitment clear and makes the limited time you have available count.

Looking to create this habit across a group of leaders in the coming year? Is it time to rebuild some of the habits and culture around investing in your people? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

What I am hearing

"We use *[insert popular assessment tool here]* for developing personality profiles with our team, but it hasn't provided the benefit we expected. Now what?"

What it means

I've heard this question repeatedly over the last month from organizations in very different places. The most common complaints about these assessment tools are:

- They're too expensive to cascade down an organization.
- The debrief was great for the leadership team and everyone left energized, but the action plans went nowhere without an ongoing relationship with a coach or consultant.
- Every time I want to use it for something else it costs me money because no one in our organization is an expert.

I preach self-knowledge, and using an assessment is a quick way to arm an individual with the self-awareness to become a better teammate, to grow as a leader, or to make career choices. There are great reasons to integrate an assessment into your talent-management strategy, but too often people make decisions based on *being sold* on a particular tool instead of making a *great buy*.

What you should do

This is a big topic, so I've written some extra blog posts to address some key questions. If I miss one, just ask and I will blog about an answer.

- Using Assessments to Save Pain in Hiring—and Provide an ROI
- Four Traps and One Truth about Assessments
- Product Reviews: Pros & Cons of Tools I Have Used

In order to get the maximum benefit from an assessment tool, you have to select it for the right reasons. Consider the following:

- What are the top three objectives of using an assessment in our organization? Can I achieve these using internal people as experts? If yes, are they capable, do they have time, and do we have the money and time to train them? If no, do I have the budget to keep an expert around long enough to hit my objectives?
- Have we been successful in the past using assessments? If yes, great! If no, why will this time will be different?
- How much does it cost per person to use? Is that an acceptable expense for an executive? A mid-level manager? An individual contributor? Leaders typically want to cascade the use of these assessments, so be ready with a plan B if the price is too high.

Do you need help building or optimizing an assessment strategy for your talent management efforts? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Develop a Solid Succession Plan

What I am hearing

"Why would I create a succession plan for my company?"

What it means

What is "succession planning"? The term can mean:

- A legal and financial plan for passing a business on to the next generation of family members
- A board-created plan to quickly respond to a CEO or senior executive departure
- A process for identifying key people that could take the place of senior leaders—both people who are ready now and those who will be ready in one to five years
- A process human resources makes us do once a year

Therein lies the problem. The term is both confusing and disconcerting, because its underlying message is, "the plan for when I'm gone." Mortality is an unpleasant topic; as a result, only 35% of organizations have succession plans.

For leaders at all levels, succession planning is a critical process. It's about planning for the future for not only your business, but your best people. My standard rule for a successful performance conversation is 30-30-40: 30% of the time is spent on past performance, 30% on the present, and 40% on the future. It's impossible to get to a future focus of 40%—especially with regard to leaders—without some form of succession planning.

What you should do

First, stop calling the people part "succession planning." In working with leaders or boards, I refer to it as "a talent review of your most valuable people and most critical roles."

Next, make two lists:

First List: Name the people in your organization who, if they left suddenly, would cost you sales, expose you to a legal risk, or make your life miserable for an extended period of time. For each one of these individuals, ask four questions:

- Have I given him/her a compliment in the last month?
- Has s/he gotten a meaningful reward in the last year?
- Do I have a development plan for this person?
- Do I have a future spot in the organization that matches his/her career goals?

Any "No" answer requires an action plan to make it a "Yes" and to retain that individual for your company.

Second List: Name the critical roles in your organization that must have great people in them for the company to be successful. All executive roles should be included, but also consider roles at any level within the organization. For these roles, ask four questions:

- Are at least 80% of the people in these roles A or B/B+ players?
- Do I have a plan for the B-/C players?
- Do I have a list of people I would plug into these roles if someone left?
- Who were the B-/C players last year, and where are they?

It's that simple, but, needless to say, not that easy.

Do you need help creating, modifying or maintaining succession plans within your organization? Are you a board member or a leader needing help with your yearly checkup? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

One thing I find in organizations is great managers/leaders that are too busy to help new people be successful, or who just have not gotten to the point in their career where they can easily tell people what they expect. I am always looking for tools that can help individuals direct their own success. The first book I reviewed was "*Managing Right For The First Time*" by David Baker. It won recognition from Inc. Magazine as a must-read for entrepreneurs because it provides simple and impactful advice that helps a new manager do their job well from the beginning.

This trU Tip highlights another great book that is designed to help individuals entering their first job, whether it is permanent or an internship. Author Jodi Glickman tells the story of how her talents for communicating and finding success were recognized by her husband, who encouraged her to start a business that used her natural talents to help others.

I recommend this book because it breaks down the actions/conversations that anyone in the workplace needs to master to create a path to success. It has developed a following with MBA programs,

students preparing for internships, and new graduates, but it is applicable to professionals at any level in an organization. I guarantee even the forty-five-year-old senior executive will walk away with something they can use! Enjoy the interview. At the end I share how you can win a free book.

About the author

Jodi Glickman, founder of *Great on the Job*, is an expert in training young people how to be rock stars at work. Jodi is an entrepreneur, author, public speaker, consultant, and regular blogger for *Harvard Business Review*. She is a faculty member of the Johnson School's Leadership Program at Cornell and a contributor to Fortune.com. Her new book, "*Great on the Job: What to Say, How to Say It, The Secrets of Getting Ahead*" has been described as a veritable master class in workplace success.

Jodi has trained some of the best and brightest young minds in business—her clients include Harvard Business School, Wharton, NYU Stern, Kellogg School of Management, BofA/Merrill, Citigroup,

and others. She is a former Peace Corps volunteer (Southern Chile) turned investment banker (Goldman Sachs) turned communications expert.

My Interview

Scott: You start the book by sharing your GIFT philosophy (Generosity, Initiative, Forward Momentum, and Transparency). How did that come together?

Jodi: The concept of GIFT was actually pretty organic—I was talking with my literary agent about the overarching themes of the book as I was drafting a proposal, and generosity, initiative, and forward momentum surfaced as critical and recurring themes. I hadn't put a structure around those themes, per se, but they were always there in the backdrop as guiding principles. Transparency was really a combination of honesty, integrity, and ownership, so we went with the "T" to round out the acronym. I think it works well in giving people four simple, practical, overarching concepts that are critical to success every day.

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Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
An Interview with Jodi Glickman (cont.)

Scott: Since your book was published in 2011, what are some ways you have seen it used by individuals and organizations? How have you been surprised?

Jodi: Actually, I tend to focus on the individual strategies more than the concept of GIFT, but I hear time and time again that GIFT is really helpful and powerful. Just last week a young professional told me she has a post-it in her cube with the words "Forward Momentum"—it helps her to always think about how to move the ball forward and what comes next before walking into her boss' office!

Scott: What is the biggest mistake you see people make when they first start a job? What is your message to them?

Jodi: I think people don't take enough initiative. They wait for assignments to find them, rather than raising their hands and asking for opportunities to work on what they're interested in learning more about and/or contributing to projects that they can succeed with. So I say ask for what you want—the worst is you get turned down, but it shows you to be strategic, thoughtful, and proactive.

Scott: Much has been written about millennials entering the workforce. Is this book targeted at just that group?

Jodi: The truth is most professionals can benefit from this book (unless they're already rock-star communicators). Millennials are at the biggest disadvantage because they've grown up in the digital age and their opportunities to engage in face-to-face dialogue are drastically different (and less frequent) than when I was moving up the corporate ladder (I'm a solid Gen-Xr). That said, there are people of all ages and levels who benefit from the strategies in this book. My husband is a great example—he really struggled with many of the scenarios for years— he was the first test-case, if you will. He uses the GOTJ strategies all the time now and sends me emails touting his success in asking for help (and sounding smart) or raising a red flag where before he would have struggled immensely to have those conversations and come off as professional, mature, and competent.

Scott: One quote I love was around feedback: "If you have a tough feedback session… remind yourself the goal of the session is not to make you feel good. The goal is to make you better at your job"(p. 129). Why is receiving and providing feedback so hard? What is one thing we can do to make it easier?

Jodi: People don't like to hear they're not doing a good job, and conversely, managers don't like telling people they're not doing a good job. It's no fun for anyone. The best thing to do to make a feedback conversation as painless as possible is to focus on solutions, not problems. If I'm going to tell you that you didn't do a good job with a client presentation or you're falling short meeting expectations, than I owe it to you to tell you HOW YOU CAN IMPROVE. That's what you and I both really care about—it's not about blame or anger or rationalizing bad behavior or poor performance. Feedback is an amazing performance development tool—if you are constructive with your comments—if you tell me what to do differently or who to talk to for pointers or how you would revise a particular memo—then I'm going to learn and improve. That takes the sting out of the conversation and puts in the context of making me a better professional and our organization a more productive and efficient one.

tru tip 20

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
An Interview with Jodi Glickman (cont.)

Scott: If I were only going to read one chapter, which one would you recommend and why?

Jodi: I actually think I'd go with GIFT, because it really does stand the test of time and is relevant to everyone and anyone. However, if you want a strategy that is short, easy, and to the point, go with the chapter on answering a question you don't know the answer to—I think it's the most elegant and memorable of the strategies, and it works like a charm. To wit, next time someone asks you a question you don't know the answer to, keep your wits about you and go with:

- Here's what I know.
- Here's what I don't know.
- Here's how I'll figure it out.

This strategy conveys that you're smart, you're on the ball, and you know some things—even if you don't know the one specific thing I asked about.

Interested in learning more about Jodi? It would we worth your effort. Here are some links that will help.

Website: http://greatonthejob.com/
Twitter: @greatonthejob
Facebook: Greatonthejob
LinkedIn: Jodi Glickman
Email: Jodi@greatonthejob.com

My Pre-Interview Blog Postings

Here are four extra blog posts about this book, in which I shared thoughts as I read Jodi's book.

1. How To Get Better At Giving Feedback? First Get Better At Receiving It

2. Follower: How Often Should I Get Feedback

3. Do You Know How To Start And End A Conversation?

4. 4 Tips For Using Great On The Job As A Learning Tool

Looking for other ideas to engage the minds and talents of your top talent? Contact me. Scott@thetrugroup.com

Book Giveaway:
There are two ways you can win a book.

1. Sign-up for the tru Tips mailing list. I will draw two names from the people who sign-up before July 4th, and they will receive a free book.

2. Engage in the conversation/post a comment on my blog: Post a comment to any of the blog entries below before July 4th. I will draw two names from all the people who posted, and they will receive a free book.

What I am hearing

"I want to establish a leadership development program. How do I build one from scratch?"

What it means

The true expense of developing your future leaders will impact your most valuable resource: your time. You will need to spend time selecting, mentoring, teaching, and providing feedback to your future leaders. Also consider the two things that participants in leadership development programs consistently rank as the two most valuable takeaways from the programs: a greater knowledge of themselves and the relationships they build with peers and senior leaders. Building a program with limited resources means having a rigorous selection conversation, committing time to spend with the participants, and fostering ownership and community within your future leaders.

What you should do

Here is an outline of some simple steps you can take to start developing your next generation of leaders.

1. Selection: With your leadership team, brainstorm a list of characteristics you look for in a leader, ultimately settling on the five to seven most important items. Next, create a list of people in your organization whom you believe would make good leaders. Include both those expressing interest in leadership and those identified by the leadership team. Finally, evaluate each candidate based on your criteria and pick the top five to ten.
2. Create a community: Bring the group of leadership candidates together monthly for check-ins, group activities, and learning from senior executives.
3. Assign a mentor: Assign a mentor—a current leader within the company—to each future leader. Future leaders should meet monthly with their mentors.
4. Focus learning on three areas:
   - Build self-knowledge: Use the Harvard Business Review article "Managing Oneself" by Peter Drucker to structure the conversation. Have the leadership candidates read and answer all the questions presented in the article and review the results with their mentors.
   - Lead: Each future leader should seek out two opportunities to lead something—one within the organization and one outside—such as volunteering, not-for-profit work, coaching, etc. Mentors and candidates should review these leadership experiences to expand self-understanding, discuss what was learned, and identify future development needs.
   - Communication: All leaders have to be great communicators. The most effective way to accomplish this is by making a commitment to attend Toastmasters for one year.

Follow up your leadership development program by (1) finding ways for each of your current leaders to spend time with each candidate throughout the year, and (2) repeating the yearly conversation to review and revise the list of candidates. When a candidate is promoted to a leadership role, use the steps above to create a new development experience for your new leader. Your time is the most valuable currency you can use to show your future leaders they are valued. Invest well.

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

truU tip 22
Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Make One-on-Ones Work by Following a Few Simple Rules

What I'm hearing

"I am committed to doing one-on-one conversations with my people, but how will we make it work?"

What it means

Two things about this statement: First, the use of *"we."* It's important to see one-on-ones as benefitting both parties involved. Actions tend to follow our attitudes, and trusting relationships are built based on a history of actions that say, "This matters to me and you matter to me." Keeping the *"we"* in this statement is step one. Second, keep in mind that this is a journey, not something you do twice and say, "Done." It is important to believe passionately in what you're doing in order to generate the energy and commitment needed to work through the setbacks that will inevitably occur.

What you should do

I have published a single-page guide to the one-on-one conversation, with rules and guidelines for both the individual and the leader. Click here to view it.

A good place to start is with the three rules for this conversation that must *never* be broken:

- Be in the same room (unless it's absolutely unavoidable—see guide).
- The individual (*not* the leader) owns the agenda.
- Never cancel without rescheduling.

My standard communication rule is to stay away from the words "never" and "always," with the following qualification: You earn the right to break these rules based on living into the word "never" as a rule. That means that, for the first three months, you treat these rules as sacred and make following them a priority. This is true for both you as the leader and for the individual taking part in the one-on-one.

The two guidelines that appear for both the leader and the individual are especially noteworthy:

- This time is to help you. Outcomes will follow your attitude.
- Follow up on all commitments.

I often hear comments such as, "I'll do it, but they don't really care," or "This is a waste of my time." I see these attitudes show up as the result of a lack of preparation or a lack of follow-through in the first few meetings. Somewhere between the fourth and tenth meetings, it changes.

Focus on the process and trust that outcomes will follow. Family business expert Greg McCann says, "When relationships matter, process trumps the solution." The number-one mistake I see in business is believing the formula to be: plan + individual ownership = accountability. The real formula is: plan + relationship + ongoing conversation = accountability.

Are you struggling with accountability on your team? Need help building or leading a team in which work gets done and the actual outcomes match the plan? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

tru tip 23

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Find a Compelling "Why" for Change

"I feel like I'm constantly reacting as a leader and spending most of my time dealing with the daily work instead of looking ahead and planning. I'm tired, and I feel like my people are getting burned out."

What it means

As a leader of a small or growing business, it's pretty normal to be constantly reacting. However, I often see a reluctance to hire, with the result that incremental growth is handled by working everyone harder, including the CEO. The question for you is, "Why change?" Are you feeling the health effects of the cycle? Are you noticing your people waiting for your orders instead of proactively solving problems? Have you lost someone valuable recently? Are you sensing a cynical attitude towards your vacations or a lack of raises?

The leader sets the tone for the organization, so if a change is needed it must start with you, and there must be a compelling "why" for you or it won't happen.

What you should do

Your first step is to assess where you are as a leader and as an organization today. Here are four key actions:

1. Observe: What is your energy level coming to work? Do you see your people taking initiative, or do you have to repeat things many times or do them yourself? What is your energy level when you leave? Take five minutes to answer these questions three times a week for the next two weeks. What does it tell you?

2. Self-assessment: What are your habits as a leader? I created a free tool called the Talent Scorecard (www.thetrugroup.com/scorecard/) that measures your key habits and gives you feedback. What does it tell you?

3. Ask people: How are your people feeling about things? For an organization with less than seventy-five people, schedule some breakfasts and start the conversation with questions like: What's working? What should we start doing? What should we stop doing? What are you wondering about? Ask and listen. If your organization has multiple locations or more than a hundred people, do a simple employee survey. Visit www.thetrugroup.com/resources/talent-management-templates/ for some tips on doing an effective employee survey.

4. Look at the numbers: Is the performance of your business flat? Do you keep losing key people and getting pulled back into the day-to-day tasks? Is the return/reward you're getting from your effort not worth it anymore?

One reason executive coaching has taken off in the last decade is because the pace of business has changed significantly. Making a personal change is a challenge, and now it's even harder because there's so much to do on a day-to-day basis. The key is to ask yourself if things are where they need to be for you and for your business, and to find a compelling "why" for making that change. A coach can help clarify what has to happen and provide a partner to help make the changes stick.

It's that simple, but, needless-to-say, not that easy.

Do you need help thinking through your "why"? Are you ready to make a personal shift with the help of a coach? Are you interested in starting a conversation within your organization through an employee survey? I know what to do!

What I am hearing

"I can't find the right talent."

What it means

At Gov. Snyder's recent economic summit, I heard the statistic that more than 90% of companies reported that they can find talent with the right education requirements, but only 50% said that they can find talent with the right skills.

Peter Capelli makes the case that there are several things employers are doing to get in their own way, including failing to offer training for key roles and trying to hire for all the skills that a role requires. His directive is to compare the cost to your organization of that role being unfilled versus the cost of training someone to get a good candidate up to speed to fill that role.

What you should do

First, identify whether your talent searches are *reactive or proactive.*

Reactive: The search starts with a need. You post a job description, have someone else do the screening interviews, and when you connect with the candidates for the final interview you are unimpressed or you get word that nobody came through the screening successfully. When you're reactive, you're left with fighting over leftover talent or depending solely on your reputation in the marketplace to attract a great pool of candidates.

Proactive: You have a list of key roles in your organization for which it is critical to have great talent. Each quarter, you review the list with your leadership team and ask each member for one name of someone s/he has met, had lunch with, or was referred to who would be a great hire if there were space. You personally meet a couple of candidates each quarter to learn more about them. When a role opens, you pull out the list and conduct interviews with these candidates.

There's a small Michigan company that maintains a close relationship with the local school district to identify and build relationships with students wanting to learn a trade. The company provides hands-on internships and hires the students right out of high school into an apprentice program. This is proactive.

To execute a more effective approach to talent searching, take the following steps:

1. Get involved and make it a priority. Asking HR or your managers to lead the effort will not create the momentum you need.
2. Take a hard look at each role description. Are the requirements prioritized, are you asking for the right things, and are you asking for too much?
3. Get proactive. I know you have a need today, but winning the talent war means doing things differently. The good news is that most of your competitors for the available talent are being reactive.

Are you having difficulty filling key roles in your organization? Does your organization need to shift to more proactive habits around key talent? Are you struggling with how to adjust your own time and focus to spend more time leading this effort? I know what to do!

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

What I'm hearing

"I don't have enough time. What can I do?"

What it means

This summer, I'm giving three presentations to various groups and conferences:
- "Time: Keeping the Monkey from Becoming an Elephant"
- "Own It! Five Tips for Managing Your Career and Performance"
- "What Motivates People? The Answer Might Surprise You… (A Development Plan Workshop)"

As I consider the issue of time, it occurs to me that the basic question I'm addressing in each of these sessions is just that: time. Managing time comes down to three fundamental practices:
1. Owning your time and making choices based on what's important.
2. Managing your time using some basic, time-tested habits.
3. Focusing the limited time that you have with your team where it will have the greatest impact.

What you should do

1. Own it
Over the next week, keep track of your time use each day using this tracking sheet. On Friday, set aside thirty minutes to do the following:
1. On a single sheet, total the time you spent on each of the items you tracked.
2. Answer the following questions (paraphrased from "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen R. Covey, p. 146):
   a. Identify two goals or priorities for your personal life, and two goals or priorities for your professional life.
   b. How does your time usage align with the personal goals you identified? What one thing could you do (that you aren't doing now) that, done on a regular basis, would make a tremendous positive difference in your personal life?
   c. How does your time usage align with the professional goals you identified? What one thing could you do in your professional life would help to advance these goals?

Pick one of the two ideas you've generated (from either b or c above), ask a close friend to hold you accountable to it, and do it.

2. Practice effective time management habits
- Start and end all meetings on time, and never have a meeting without an agenda.
- Answer emails only at noon and during the last twenty minutes of the day. Turn off all email and messaging alerts and tell your people to call if an answer is needed in fewer than four hours.
- Do not make to-do lists; everything that has to be done must go into your calendar.
- Limit all emails to fewer than on hundred words. If a longer communication is needed, call or setup a ten-minute meeting.

3. Maximize your leadership time
People are not motivated solely by money, car allowances, or even words of affirmation. People have good days when they get things accomplished, feel supported, and see the bigger impact of what they're doing.

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

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Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Improve your Time Management (cont.)

As a leader, the best thing you can do with your time is to:

- Check in daily to ask about successes, hear questions, and provide support where needed.
- Carve out monthly one-on-one time to touch base in a more organized and accountable setting.

I have a passion for individuals, teams and organizations going through transitions. Time management requires change to do it better. To support you in this change, here is a special resource page with some great resources.

As always, if this topic feels too big or if you're having trouble finding the time to address it effectively, contact me. I know what to do!

Special Edition for MLTA

Since the MLTA convention this past summer, I've had a number of conversations with people looking to make changes in how they manage their time. I thought this was a good chance to write a follow-up trU Tip focused on helping you make some of these changes stick. Here are five tips for accomplishing that end.

Step 1: Observe Your Normal Behavior

We are action-oriented people, and too often we jump into solving a problem without really understanding it. This step is about understanding what your natural behavior is so you can start to recognize those moments in which you need to choose a different direction. This is called self-awareness and self-management.

Over three to five days, take ten minutes at the end of the day to journal about the situations where the behavior you're trying to change popped up. For example, if your goal is to take on fewer monkeys (i.e. problems or tasks) from your team, your journal questions could be: "What tasks on my to-do list were not there this morning? Where did they come from? What am I learning by looking back at my choices during the day?"

Step 2: Set Your First Goal and Keep It Small

One major mistake I often see is setting goals that are too big. For example, if your goal is to shift your monkey-collecting habits, making a goal to change your management style with your entire team today is too big. Select one or two key relationships and focus on your conversations with those individuals. Select people who are ready and willing to take on more, and make it a goal to ask them three simple questions each time they bring you a monkey:

- "What solutions have you considered?"
- "Which solution would you recommend?"
- "How can I support you?"

Don't keep your goal a secret. Share what you're trying to do with the individuals you've selected so that they understand what you're trying to achieve.

Step 3: Get Support

Every successful change effort has a built-in support structure. Two examples that come to mind are Weight Watchers and Alcoholics Anonymous, programs that exemplify how significant, lasting change takes a community. If possible, find two people to support you. The first should be a person who can be present when you're making the behavior changes. His/her job is to give you feedback and to help with the change. The second person should be someone who's already skilled in the behavior that you're trying to achieve. His/her role is that of mentor, helping you to think through changes and providing you with wisdom when you get stuck.

Step 4: Monitor Your Progress

Monitoring progress looks a lot like Step 1. Sit down daily or weekly to assess how you're doing. Stick with a single change

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Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Make a Change Work by Following 5 Key Steps (cont.)

goal for one or two months; a change takes twenty-one days to become a habit. Be accountable to your supporters (Step 3) or your leader. Reporting back to them is a great way to leverage their commitment to your growth.

Step 5: Celebrate and Repeat

We too often forget to stop, celebrate our achievements, and treat ourselves to something special. If you're working to become a questioner/listener with individuals on your team in order to stop taking monkeys from them, it's a success when they tell you that they've seen a change in your management style. When they share specific instances in which you have successfully helped them think through a problem and pick a solution, that's a victory. Celebrate!

Here's a resource page with links to many of the resources I talked about this summer. http://www.thetrugroup.com/training-and-keynote-speaking/resources-time-management/

As always, if this topic feels too big or if you're having trouble finding the time to address it effectively, contact me. I know what to do!

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Make Mentoring Profitable for Your Business

What I am hearing

"The time I spent being mentored by our vice president was great. I wish they would give me another mentor like that this year."

What it means

Our time and attention is a gift we give. Yes, a gift! Leaders often forget the impact that they have on people. I've observed that, when asked, most leaders are quite willing to spend time with someone, listen a little, and share some of their own experiences. It's often a welcome break from their packed schedules and decision-a-minute pace.

Mentoring works, especially with a specific goal in mind. It can work in a broader leadership program or standing alone, but it needs a development plan to drive the most effective outcomes for the individual and the organization.

What you should do

For individuals in search of mentoring:

This summer, I presented my *Five Tips for Managing Your Career and Performance.* Here are the first four tips:

1. Own it. Here are your choices: (1) Stay the course for the year, do your best in your role, and take learning as it comes. (2) Set some goals for yourself, make a commitment to achieve those goals, and find a path to achieving them. If you choose (1), mentoring is probably not needed this year.

2. Find a mentor. When you have some goals, leverage your network to find someone you respect professionally and has achieved some of the things you want to achieve. For example, if you're moving into a sales leadership role and want to transition from selling to leading a sales team, look for an experienced sales leader.

3. Google it. Advice for starting a mentoring relationship is plentiful. Find a couple of articles and you will become an expert. Use the advice when you approach potential mentors.

4. Own it. I have experienced both sides of this relationship. The characteristics I look for in a mentee are a passion for personal growth and follow-through. As a mentor, I'm always surprised how much benefit I get out of the relationship.

For leaders:

I was involved in several employee surveys in 2013, and all three identified "investing in growth and development" as something people wanted more of. Providing support for your people in creating development plans for themselves is a great gift. Benefits of supporting the professional growth of your people include:

- Your people see you as someone who cares about their development.
- You connect with a valued colleague or leader in your organization and s/he helps you build your business by developing a key team member.
- Your budget impact is a few lunches.

What's the ROI of mentoring to your organization? A big number that will make your CFO smile.

Interested in becoming more intentional about developing your people? Are you seeing business goals that make you wonder whether you have the right team to get there? Making a connection—from development-planning to mentoring—could be a part of the answer. This is a conversation I always look forward to having, and this is a great gift to give.

Uncertain what to do next? Contact me. scott@thetrugroup.com

Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive:
Have Regular One-on-Ones With Your Talent

What I'm hearing

"What is the compelling reason to do regular one-on-ones with your team?"

What it means

One of the chief challenges of leadership is competing priorities. One mark of maturing leaders is their ability to tell me what they believe and how that drives their priorities and habits. I don't subscribe to a one-size-fits-all philosophy with regard to leadership habits. If you have more than ten direct reports, it's almost impossible to do one-on-ones more than bi- or tri-monthly. When confronted with the above question, I ask the following:

- What do you believe are the priorities of an effective leader?
- What do you believe your people need from you?
- How do those priorities inform your habits and routines as a leader?

What you should do

As a leader, at some point you must decide what you believe leadership is. Only then can you begin the journey toward developing the skills and experience you need to lead based on that conviction, and not based on what you're told or what kind of leadership you're receiving. I offer two thoughts on the business case for one-on-ones:

1. Gallup did some great research (complied and interpreted in the book "*First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*" by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman) connecting employee perceptions to customer satisfaction, profitability, productivity, and turnover. Good things happened for businesses when employees agreed strongly with these statements:

- I know what is expected of me at work.
- My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.

2. Research by Frederick Herzberg identifies achievement, recognition, the work itself, and responsibility as the top four intrinsic factors in employee motivation.

I believe that the top priority of an effective leader is to maximize organizational performance, a goal that can be achieved only through his/her people. People will do more of what is asked of them if they feel a deeper connection to their organization or team, and if they see their needs being addressed. Gallup, Herzberg, and other researchers have confirmed this. It's not easy to balance the needs of individuals and the needs of the organization, but that's what leaders are tasked with.

The final questions I ask leaders in exploring the relevance of one-on-ones are:

- How do you measure success?
- For each person on your team: How does s/he measure success? What does s/he need from you right now? What are his/her key personal and professional goals?

Effective leadership is tied to having conversations focused on continually reviewing the needs of the organization, understanding the needs of the individual, and dealing directly with any misalignment that surfaces between the two. The one-on-one isn't the only leadership habit that meets this fundamental need, but it is the most direct way to address the needs of both the business and the individual.

Is this a conversation that you want to explore more? Do you see an opportunity to build this habit into the leadership norms in your organization?