

Lesson 25 Worksheet: Leading a Creative Team

This worksheet will help you make the most of the opportunity of leading a creative team and minimize the challenges of getting things done through other people.

1. The opportunity

Leading a team is your opportunity to create something on a bigger scale than you could achieve on your own.

What do you want to create?

What will it look like when it's finished?

Who do you need on the team?

If they're not already on board, how are you going to find them?

2. Six types of leadership

Here are the six types of leadership identified by Daniel Goleman in his article 'Leadership that gets results':

1. **Coercive** – demanding compliance
2. **Authoritative** – mobilizing people towards a vision
3. **Affiliative** – building relationships and promoting harmony
4. **Democratic** – promoting consensus through participation
5. **Pacesetter** – setting high standards by example and demanding the same of others
6. **Coaching** – delegating responsibility and developing people for success

(a) Which has the most positive impact on team morale and performance?

(b) Which should you avoid?

(c) Which is usually neglected by leaders?

Answers at the end of the worksheet.

For the original article visit: <https://hbr.org/2000/03/leadership-that-gets-results>

3. Authoritative leadership

(a) What's your vision for your team?

(b) Why does the vision matter...

... to you?

... to your team?

... to the organisation?

... to the industry?

... to the world?

(c) Prepare a presentation for your team that outlines your vision.

Use the ideas in Lesson 24 to help you <http://lateralaction.com/presentation-skills/>

And once you've done the hard work of preparing it, reward yourself – and them – by delivering it. 😊

4. Motivating your team

Read my free ebook *How to Motivate Creative People (Including Yourself)*, which you can download here: <http://www.wishfulthinking.co.uk/2009/01/05/how-to-motivate-creative-people/>

When you first start working with your team, work through the questions in chapter 10 – ‘Questions to ask before beginning any creative project’ and make sure you have good answers in all four sections, to be confident of keeping your team motivated and creative over the long term.

Use the same questions at the start of each project you undertake with them.

5. Coaching skills

Once you have defined and communicated your vision, use coaching skills to keep people motivated, on target and delivering outstanding results day in, day out.

(a) Goal setting

Use SMART goals to define and agree goals with team members. Take particular care to ensure they are just as motivated and committed to achieve the goal (the 'Attractive' part) as you are!

- **Specific** – What exactly do you want to achieve?
- **Measurable** – How will you know you have achieved it?
- **Attractive** – What's the attraction for everyone involved?
- **Realistic** – What makes you think you can achieve it?
- **Timed** – What's the deadline? And the schedule?

As well as formal goal-setting, get into the habit of:

- Having a goal for every meeting and spelling it out at the start
- Asking goal-focused questions in day-to-day conversation with your team ('What are you trying to achieve?' 'What do you need to do to make it happen?')
- Turning problems and complaints into goals ('What do you want instead?' 'What needs to happen for this problem to go away?')

(b) Listening

Get into the habit of active listening:

- Show that you are giving your undivided attention – don't look at your phone, computer screen, notes etc.
- Listen without interrupting – *especially* when you disagree!
- Pay attention to body language – voice tone, posture, gesture, facial expression, hesitation etc.
- Empathize – try to put yourself in their shoes. Assume they have a valid point of view, even if you don't share it.
- Summarize to check you have understood correctly.

(c) Questioning

Use questions to focus people's attention and unlock their creativity.

Even if you think you have a better answer, people will be more motivated and creative if you give them the opportunity to think problems through for themselves. And they may even surprise you with an amazing idea!

Make sure you are asking open questions rather than closed ones. E.g. 'What do you think we should do?' instead of 'What do you think of doing X?'

Here are a few examples of different types of questions you can use.

What if? questions

To bypass critical thinking and focus on solutions.

'What if you had free rein to do the work as you chose? What would you do?'

'What if you felt free to tell Zack exactly how you felt, what would you say?'

Exceptions questions

When people feel overwhelmed by problems, getting them to recognise exceptions and resourceful behaviours.

'Have you ever solved a problem like this before? What did you do?'

'Has there ever been a time when you had a productive working relationship with this person? What were you doing differently? What were they doing differently?'

Reframing questions

To help people find new options by looking at things in a new way.

'How do you think the situation looks from the client's point of view?'

'What opportunities does this problem give us?'

'Supposing you step back and look at the big picture - what do you notice?'

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Options questions

To prompt people to think creatively.

'What are your options?'

'What have you tried? What else could you do?'

'What do people least expect you to do?'

*'OK it looks like you've found the right answer - what's the second right answer?'**

*This question comes from Roger von Oech's book *A Whack on the Side of the Head*.

(d) Following up and giving feedback

If you want people to deliver great creative work, you need to give them a certain amount of freedom (within clearly defined limits) to do the job in their own way.

But you're also responsible for the results, so you need to follow up the initial conversation by checking in on progress to see how things are going – and giving feedback where required.

Feedback on creative work

For advice on giving feedback on creative work, see these two articles:

<http://www.wishfulthinking.co.uk/2007/08/20/too-many-notes-how-not-to-give-feedback-on-creative-work/>

<http://www.wishfulthinking.co.uk/2007/08/22/5-tips-for-giving-feedback-on-creative-work/>

Feedback on behaviour

Giving 'negative feedback' on behaviour when someone steps out of line is a delicate process, but the following principles will make it easier and more effective:

- Make sure you've already given plenty of positive feedback. If you have a track record of giving open, honest praise to someone, it makes it far easier than if you only jump in to criticise when things go wrong.
- **Appreciate (or at least acknowledge) the PERSON – deliver feedback on specific BEHAVIOUR.** You don't need to rebuild their personality, just get them to do something different.
- **Focus on the FUTURE more than the PAST.** Sometimes it's helpful to analyse the past and what went wrong, but beware of getting stuck in accusations and defensiveness. If this happens, switch to finding new options for the future.
- **Avoid BLAME, make REQUESTS.** Faced with blame, all we can do is defend ourselves. Faced with a request, we have the option of accepting, rejecting or negotiating. One keeps us stuck, the other may get us unstuck.

And if you're dealing with a really difficult ~~person~~ situation, revisit Lesson 23 on Dealing with Difficult People: <http://lateralaction.com/dealing-with-difficult-people/>

Answers to Question 2

(a) Which has the most positive impact on team morale and performance?

Authoritative.

(b) Which should you avoid?

Coercive and Pacesetting.

(c) Which is usually neglected by leaders?

Coaching.