The Fear & Vulnerability Retrospective

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“In any given moment, we have two options: to step forward into growth or to step back into safety.”

Abraham Maslow
Increased:
• Profitability
• Retention
• Promotability
• Communication
• Error detection
• Delegation
• Accountability

Reduced:
• Cost structures
• Political maneuvering
• Interdepartmental strife
• Disengagement
• Dumpster fires
Setting the stage

You are here

The Stretch Zone
Where all change, growth & transformation happens

The Panic Zone
Trust in the stretch zone

- **Self**: You trust yourself to have the courage and bravery to persevere and recover from any failure.

- **Other**: Trust in your teammates, coaches and leaders that they will pull, push or prod you along and support you when you need it.

- **Self + Other**: Trust in yourself to recognize your panic zone and be heard by your teammates if you say, “too far!”
Honesty

- To admit your fears and your sense of vulnerability
- To bring your full, authentic self without pretense
- To shine a light on your flaws

“Everyone is perfect and there is a lot room for improvement.”
Four windows into fear

- **Personal** – This is about “Me” – My psychological, inner world; how I see things, what I experience, my mindset.

- **Practices** – Refers to the team structure, methods, metrics, processes, decision making patterns.

- **Relational** – A shared vision and interpersonal dynamics among peers; how we interact, what we value together, our shared vision.

- **Environmental** – Everything external to the team systems, including other value streams, handoffs, rules, corporate culture and policies.
Temperature check

- Courage
- Resilience
- Vulnerability
- Alliances
Courage

“Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently.”

Maya Angelou

- Dictionary: *The ability to do something that frightens one*
- Honesty + perseverance + vitality + bravery
- Courage is fear holding on one minute longer
Resilience

“Resiliency practices help you keep going, find meaning in the often long and political process of creating change, and see the good in [organizations] – even on days that can feel like you’re lost in a bureaucratic hairball.

Lois Kelly

- Dictionary: *The capacity to adapt to stress or loss healthfully*
- Positivity
- Focus
- Flexibility
- Organization
- Proactivity
Vulnerability

There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.

- Dictionary: The quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally

- Being comfortable with others knowing that one is a work in progress

JFK
Alliances

Building alliances across your organization will help you remove barriers, encourage speaking up, and spark creativity.

Lois Kelly

- Dictionary: relationships based on an affinity in interests, nature, or qualities; a union or association formed for mutual benefit

- Support Pack
- Wild Pack
- Caring Pack
- Inner Board Room
Safety Check Survey

1. I’ll smile, claim everything is great and agree with the managers.
2. I’m not going to say much; I’ll let others bring up issues.
3. I’ll talk about some things, but others will be hard to say.
4. I’ll talk about almost anything; a few things might be hard.
5. No problem, I’ll talk about anything.
0. I need to leave, right now.
Ok, here we go: the sorta scary part

In the context of work, your team, your organization:

• What are the things you fear?
• Where is trust at risk?
• Where do you feel vulnerable?

Write stuff down...one per sticky-note: min. 5 notes per person

• ~ 10 mins
Now, the really scary part

Share with your table

• Place into one of the “four windows”

• Affinity-group like post-its

• ~ 10 mins
Ok, you can exhale

• Five dot votes (honor system) per person
• **What are the top things that keep you up at night?**
• Distribute anyway you like
• ~ 3 mins
What do you see?
What emerges time and time again

1. Fear of **being held accountable** where I’m not really responsible or in real control
2. Fear of **failure**
3. Fear of being **under-appreciated**, or some else taking credit for my ideas
4. Fear of **loss of job** or other reprisals
5. Fear of **loss of respect**, reputation or credibility
6. Fear of **letting others down**
7. Fear of **stagnation** or chances of a promotion and lack of personal growth
8. Fear of **conflict**, of disagreeing with others, worry about boundaries of what’s appropriate or professional
9. Fear of **separation**, alienation, being an outsider, upsetting “The Boss,” being labeled “not a team player”
10. Fear of **being wrong and or embarrassment**, looking dumb, humiliation or ridicule
11. Fear of **being labeled a jerk** or arrogant
12. Fear of **loss of identity** and individualism (i.e., resistance is futile)
Look to the future

Building an actions list…
What can we do about our fears?

• Pair / triple up at your tables
• High level idea generation - think Epics
• What are some big assumptions?
• Nothing is off the table
What can we do about our fears? (Epics)

I / Personal (Singular/Interior)
• What I’m expected to do is…
• I want to learn more about…
• I should ask for help when…

We / Relational (Collective/Interior)
• One thing we can both stop/start is…
• We are both motivated by…
• What we don’t dare to do yet is…

It / Practices (Singular/Exterior)
• What I expect from my leadership is…
• The reason the team is at risk is…
• What the team needs most is…

Its / Environmental (Collective/Exterior)
• I’m proud of our team when…
• What our stakeholders can expect is…
• The reason our value stream can be blocked is…
Sharing anyone?

“... remember, it takes twice as much energy to fake and hide who you really are than it does to just be honest, to just be your real self.”

Greg Kunkel, Next Jump
*An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization*
What can you do about your fears?

• **Take responsibility for yourself.** Acknowledge that you are becoming defensive or fearful. Try telling the person you are with that you’re starting to notice that.

• **Slow Down.** Take space, stay quiet for at least a 10-count, take two deep breaths and change your posture.

• **Confront your negative self-talk.** See if you can switch from red-zone to green-zone self-talk.

• **Explore your fear with conscious awareness**, trying to understand the root causes, and ask yourself, “What am I trying to override?”
What can you do about your fears?

- **Check your assumptions.** Everyone must make many assumptions on a daily basis in order to get by. The biggest problem with assumptions is the rigidity with which we hold them.

- **Start over.** When you realize that you have become defensive or fearful, acknowledge that, take some action to reduce your defensiveness/fear.

- **Building Alliances.** Nobody said we have to travel alone.
Deeper dive into change

Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have - and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up.

James Belasco, Ralph Stayer, *Flight of the Buffalo*
Building upon the foundation

- Brene Brown
  TED Talks and
  YouTube videos
Building upon the foundation

- Personal Maps
  Getting to Know the Whole Human Being
Building upon the foundation

• VIA Character Strengths
• CANOE
• Kantor 4-Player Model
• Moving Motivators
Wrap up

• Vulnerability-based trust on a team is not a given

• It won’t magically appear after a single retrospective

• It takes instances of individuals admitting their fears, their mistakes, their vulnerabilities

• It requires people taking risks that move them outside of their comfort zones
Wrap up

“When we take those risks, we are virtually assured we will stumble. Our habits, blind spots, and shortcomings will most certainly be revealed.”

Doug Silsbee
The Mindful Coach
Let’s keep the conversation going…

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