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Leading Through Change
What Employees Want and Need

Gallup has studied the needs of followers and discovered four basic needs: trust, stability, compassion and hope.

These four needs intensify during times of change and in challenging times. They become a guidepost for thinking about how we interact and communicate. Consider the following:

- **Trust**: Communicate openly and authentically. Provide avenues to listen and respond.
- **Stability**: Highlight what stays the same for employees. For example, the fact that we are "client-obsessed" doesn't change, but how we deliver it might.
- **Compassion**: Show you care. Make regular check-ins a priority with employees who may be working in a variety of settings. Ask how they are doing and what they need.
- **Hope**: Provide a sense of hope. Help employees see that changes and challenges cause us to innovate and grow in new ways.

What are Gallup's best practices for managing in changing or challenging times?

- **Empower managers**: Remember, 70% of how a team feels is impacted by their local manager. Prioritize getting managers the tools to have conversations that engage their teams and help them meet their needs.
- **Focus on meeting basic emotional needs**: Gallup has identified twelve emotional needs that employees must have met to perform well. Use this simple research-based yes/no needs checklist to make sure you are setting your employees up to succeed during changing and challenging times:
    - **Focus Me**: Do employees know what is expected of them right now in order to stay focused on the most important priorities?
    - **Free Me From Unnecessary Stress**: Do employees have the materials and equipment they need to be free of unnecessary stress?
    - **Know Me**: Do employees feel like we know them and are supporting them to still do what they do best?
    - **Help Me See My Value**: Do employees feel recognized and valued?
    - **Care About Me**: Do employees feel cared for?
    - **Help Me Grow**: Do employees feel their development and growth are being championed?
    - **Hear Me**: Do employees feel their opinions count?
    - **Help Me See My Importance**: Do employees feel personally connected to the bigger mission?

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  - **Help Me Feel Proud**: Do employees feel a sense of pride in the quality we are committed to?
  - **Help Me Build Trust**: Do employees feel they can navigate this change through trusting relationships?
  - **Help Me Review My Contribution**: Do employees understand their progress and contributions?
  - **Challenge Me**: Do employees have opportunities to be challenged to learn and grow in new ways?

- **Discuss what employees can contribute through their talent**: Gallup knows that people are uniquely wired to respond to change and challenges through their own talent and strengths. Consider how you process change personally and how your team members do. Openly discuss:
  - What talent do you **bring** to navigating this change or challenge? (For example, an employee may have a talent to help the team develop contingency plans.)
  - What do you **need** from the team to navigate this change or challenge well? (For example, an employee may need regular touch points to feel they are in the loop.)

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Leading Through Change
Conversation Starters

During times of change, uncertainty and chaos, people look to leadership to provide a way forward — and to provide confidence that they can contribute. In times of crisis, there are two directions human nature can take us: fear, helplessness and victimization or self-actualization and engagement. On the latter, if leaders have a clear way forward, human beings are amazingly resilient. There is a documented "rally effect."

Gallup meta-analytics have found four universal needs that followers have of leaders: trust, compassion, stability and hope. These needs are especially urgent during disruption. People look for these traits in their leaders as a signal that their life will be OK and that they can be part of the solution.

Leaders can use these conversation starters to help understand whether they are meeting these four needs and gauge what their people are thinking. When leaders apply their strengths to each of the needs, they can further individualize their approach to build trust, compassion, stability and hope for their people and the organization. Leaders can use these questions in any number of ways:

- Set aside time to work one-on-one with your team and ask them the questions, taking notes on their response.
- Pick out one or two questions from each area for the team to consider, then share their responses in a weekly team meeting or videoconference.
- Consider asking some of your own questions — this is not an exhaustive list, but a starting point.

Trust

As highlighted in *The Trusted Advisor* (Maister et al., 2001), trust has many layers. The "trusted advisor" formula defines trust as the numerator of credibility + reliability + intimacy divided by the denominator of self-orientation, defined as a too-narrow focus on your own interests.[1] The three words often associated with trust are honesty, integrity and respect.

- When you feel most trusted, what is happening to make you feel that way?
- What do I currently do as a leader that I should have you take more responsibility for, or completely own?
- How often should we meet to have conversations about what you are working on, and how can I support you?
- When faced with a complex problem, what is the best way for me to offer support that helps us build trust with one another?

1 Maister, D. H., Green, C. H., Galford, R. M. (2001). The trusted advisor. Free Press.

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Compassion

Often described as caring, friendship and happiness, compassion means treating employees as the human beings they are. People want to matter, on the job and beyond the job. Treating someone like a cog in a machine is far from a compassionate act.

- Beyond work, what is important to you and why?
- What do you feel good about in your life and work?
- What is worrying you about your life and work?
- When you succeed, what is the best way for me to recognize your efforts?
- What don't you know about me that you are curious about?

Stability

Building a sense of stability is an incredibly important aspect of leadership. When asked about how leaders contribute stability to their lives, followers frequently use words like security, strength, support and peace. Things work better when employees feel a sense of stability.

- What do you feel are your most important priorities?
- What are you most clear about regarding your responsibilities at work?
- What are you least clear about regarding your responsibilities at work?
- Where do you feel we work together effectively?
- Where do you feel we could work together better?
- When you consider our partnership, where are we more stable? Where are we less stable?
- Who are your favorite partners? How often do you get to work with these people?
- What is outside of your span of control that you're worried about? In that area, what is within your span of control? How can I best support you in that area?

Hope

Hope is absolutely essential to the sustainable success of an organization. It helps employees see a way forward when facing uncertainty. Hope is a powerful thing. When you as a leader build hope in followers, it raises their sense that there are better days to come. Hope enables followers to be more resilient when they are faced with trying or difficult times.

- What gives you hope right now?
- What are you excited about in the future?
- What are you unsure about in the future regarding work, and how could I help you feel more confident about it?
- What would you like to be doing differently in the next year that would play to your strengths?
- How does your work connect to the mission or purpose of our organization?

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