



RRK COACHING & EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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Building Creative, Mutual, and Actively Supportive Relationships and Developing Theories of Mind An Initial Inquiry

Introduction

Virtually nothing happens in any group or organization outside of the context of a human relationship. The heart of the definitions of leadership and management consist in practicing the arts of getting things accomplished through others. Implicitly and explicitly, leaders are recruited and promoted for their ability to build strong working relationships with others and to find, recruit, and select others with the same knowledge, ability, skill, experience, and personal characteristics.

Despite the centrality of these competencies, there is no contemporary textbook on leadership that spends a significant amount of time on how individuals in these positions can accomplish this most important and ongoing task. In order to understand the essentials of relationship development, we can turn to current psychodynamic theory. One of its major branches has emphasized the central importance of humans having early and sustained experiences inside of secure human relationships and the capacity to engage in their development and maintenance in reflective ways. Dennett (1989) and

Fonagy (2005), and Kilburg (2006) have provided detailed treatments of many of these essentials.

One key to being able to create effective relationships involved the ability to build accurate mental and emotional maps of the people with whom we engage. The terms used in this literature are “Theories of Mind” and Theories of Mind of Others.” Research and theory suggest that infants begin formulating primitive understandings of the intentions of others and deliberately interacting with them based on such patterns in the first year of life (Dennett, 1989; Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2005; Klein, 1999, 2003). While these exchanges remain devoid of words to describe them, they are visible and repeatable in scientific studies.

How then can leaders become more effective at building theories of their own minds and those of the others on whom they most depend? Extensive arrays of the interpersonal skills they are expected to have are well documented in the literature and in virtually every multi-rater assessment instrument (Bolton, 1986; Hargie, 2006; Kilburg, 2000, 2012; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2011). Crucial to building theories of mind are the abilities to be both curious about and empathize oneself and others. The easiest way to do so is to develop the ability to inquire systematically about oneself and others. Kilburg, (2006, 2012) provided detailed lists of questions that can be used as part of such a process. What follows is a brief overview of questions and topics leaders can explore on their own to continue to construct their theory of their own mind and to engage key colleagues in a mutual effort to create a deeper understanding of their minds.

Questions and Topics to Help Formulate a Theory of Mind (TOM and TOMO – Theory of Mind of Others).

1. What are your primary dimensions of diversity?
 - a. Age
 - b. Race
 - c. Ethnicity
 - d. Physical Capacities
 - e. Gender
 - f. Sexual Orientation
2. What are your secondary dimensions of diversity?
 - a. Work background
 - b. Geographical location and history of moves
 - c. Marital status
 - d. Military experience
 - e. Religion/beliefs
 - f. Education
 - g. Parental status
 - h. Income
3. What other significant dimensions of diversity are relevant to you and your working relationships?
 - a. Hot buttons and triggers to injury, anger, frustration, anxiety, and conflict?
 - b. Major personality characteristics
 - i. Extraversion-Introversion
 - ii. Openness to experience
 - iii. Agreeableness
 - iv. Conscientiousness
 - v. Neuroticism
 - c. Intelligences
 - i. Linguistic
 - ii. Musical
 - iii. Logical-Mathematical
 - iv. Spatial
 - v. Bodily-Kinesthetic
 - vi. Personal
- d. Preferred types of thinking/styles
- e. Components of emotional intelligence
- f. Virtues – courage, temperance, justice, reverence, wisdom, etc.
- g. Vices – cowardice, intemperance, psychopathy/unjust, irreverent, stupidity
- h. Interpersonal games preferred (See Berne, 19)
- i. Preferred leadership style
 - i. Visionary
 - ii. Charismatic
 - iii. Transformational
 - iv. Transactional
 - v. Autocratic
 - vi. Democratic
 - vii. Laissez-faire
 - viii. Servant
 - ix. Exploitative
 - x. Authentic
- j. Preferred conflict style
 - i. Avoiding
 - ii. Accommodating
 - iii. Compromising
 - iv. Competing
 - v. Collaborating
- k. What are your/his-her politics?
 - i. Who wants what, who gets what, why and how?
- l. What are your major likes?
- m. What are your major dislikes?
- n. Who are hero's to you?
- o. Who are villains to you?

- p. Who are/were your best teachers, mentors, role models coaches? Why?
- q. Who are/were your worst teachers, mentors, role models coaches? Why?
- 4. My best interpersonal skills are:
 - a. Communications
 - b. Problem solving
 - c. Decision making
 - d. Influencing
 - e. Managing Conflict
 - f. Creating intimacy
 - g. Exploring and managing dimensions of diversity
- 5. My, his/her best leadership and management skills are:
 - a. Business Acumen
 - b. Functional Technical Skills
 - c. Technical Learning
 - d. Decision Quality
 - e. Intellectual Horsepower
 - f. Learning on the Fly
 - g. Problem Solving
 - h. Dealing with Ambiguity
 - i. Creativity
 - j. Innovation Management
 - k. Perspective
 - l. Strategic Agility
 - m. Timely Decision Making
 - n. Priority Setting
 - o. Organizing
 - p. Planning
 - q. Time Management
 - r. Delegation
 - s. Developing Direct Reports and Others
 - t. Informing
 - u. Managing and Measuring Work
 - v. Process Management
 - w. Managing Through Systems
 - x. Total Work Systems
 - y. Command Skills
 - z. Conflict Management
 - aa. Confronting Direct Reports
 - bb. Managerial Courage Other than Direct Reports
 - cc. Standing Alone
 - dd. Hiring and Staffing
 - ee. Sizing Up People
 - ff. Action Oriented
 - gg. Perseverance
 - hh. Drive for Results
 - ii. Organizational Savvy
 - jj. Political Savvy
 - kk. Presentation Skills
 - ll. Written Communications
 - mm. Career Ambition
 - nn. Comfort Around Higher Management
 - oo. Approachability
 - pp. Interpersonal Savvy
 - qq. Caring About Direct Reports
 - rr. Compassion
 - ss. Boss Relationships
 - tt. Customer Focus
 - uu. Managing Diversity
 - vv. Fairness to Direct Reports
 - ww. Peer Relationships
 - xx. Understanding Others (Groups)
 - yy. Motivating Others
 - zz. Negotiating
 - aaa. Building Effective Teams
 - bbb. Managing Vision and Purpose
 - ccc. Ethics and Values
 - ddd. Integrity and Trust
 - eee. Composure
 - fff. Humor Listening
 - ggg. Patience
 - hhh. Personal Disclosure
 - iii. Dealing with Paradox
 - jjj. Self-Development
 - kkk. Self-Knowledge
 - lll. Work/Life Balance

6. How would you summarize and describe your theory of mind about this person?

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