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quarterly

TOGETHER

Lead: **Individuals, teams & the organization**

Engage: **Connection to the organization**

Insure "Us": **Create it together**

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NQ14: Together
By Jarrod Shappell

The inch-long Bluestreak Wrasse enters the mouth of the 120 lb cod willingly. The small fish is not a meal for the human-sized cod, but rather the cod is providing life to the wrasse.

The Bluestreak Wrasse is a tiny fish that is a member of a fish family known as the "Cleaners." These Cleaners feed on the dead skin and parasites that are on larger fish while the larger fish receives the benefits of being cleaned and having other immune benefits stimulated. In fact, the overall health, size, and even diversity of fishes are greater in the reefs where Cleaners are found versus those without their services. Sometimes the most profound examples of together-ness thrive in places we'd least expect.

Fish eat each other's bacteria, and it helps them all live longer healthier lives. Larger birds often protect smaller birds from predators. Ants work together by the millions to build storehouses for the food that they procure and then share. Cooperation is a practice of all life forms it seems.

Humans engage in mutually-beneficial cooperative activities to reach goals as simple as moving a couch with a neighbor to as complicated as building bridges, playing symphonies, or eradicating diseases. But how is our cooperation different than that of our animal kingdom friends? Yuval Noah Harari, in his book Homo Deus, explains the difference this way, saying "Sapiens rule the world because only they can weave an intersubjective web of meaning: a web of laws, forces, entities, and places that exist purely in their common imagination. This web allows humans alone to organize crusades, socialist revolutions, and human rights movements." While lesser evolved forms of life cooperate for survival (food, shelter, protection), humans cooperate for meaning.

Consider your organization's mission statement. This mission was written to describe the unique impact that can be created when a group of people comes together. Organizational mission statements are rarely something that a single individual could do, but rather take into account the necessity of multiple, diverse individuals coming together to achieve it. So, how do these mission statements so easily become window dressing and screensaver fodder? Because it's hard to work together. The meaning behind that mission statement only inspires your workforce, arbitrates hard tradeoffs, and shapes direction, when it is embodied in the ways it was intended.

The problem is that organizations, by their very nature, are places of fragmentation. And the larger and more complex they get, the more pieces they get cut into. Centrifugal force is natural. Centripetal force requires intention. Coming together in common endeavor demands risk. It requires the exchange of our egos, our "way," our turf, for the hope that, together, something better will result.

So in a world where useless, cheesy team-building abounds, where research suggests that sometimes we are on collaboration overload, and where careers are built on making yourself stand apart from others, how do we learn to truly embrace togetherness as a vital, and unique, source of meaning?

Our families, neighborhoods, and most definitely our organizations are places where cooperation can be used to make meaning. But more often than not we see competition and not cooperation. Merging organizations fight to hang on to previous company culture. Rather than collaborating, high potentials compete. Co-founders debate over product details because they believe they alone hold the "right" vision. These experiences are not evidence of the selfish evolution of man, but rather proof that when multiple passionate people come together, there is both the immense potential for meaning and an equal risk for chaos and conflict. The centrifugal force of individuality in tension with the centripetal force of communities coming together. Must it be a contest?

> Our families, neighborhoods, and most definitely our organizations are places where cooperation can be used to make meaning.

This NQ14 is all about how to make meaning TOGETHER. We are going to be writing about how connecting individuals, teams, and organizations to realize the mysterious promise of what happens when we combine our efforts, resources, and dreams. Our hope is that we find what seems to be true of all of life – that the survival of the fittest is actually the survival of the most cooperative. And that our greatest sense of sustained meaning is found not just in our own efforts, but when we discover what those efforts can do when joined with those of others.

How to be a Great Advocate for Those You Advise

By Ron Carucci

The relationship between leaders and those that advise them is sacred. At Navalent, we treat that relationship with the greatest esteem. Fewer circumstances are more challenging in a leader's life than initiating dramatic organization change in the face of staunch resistance. During a complex change initiative, the phrase "lonely at the top" can take on a whole new meaning. At this juncture, clients need more than our advice as consultants—they also need our support.

As clients interact with their teams and units of their companies, they frequently face individuals who disagree with the direction they are proposing or the methods they advocate for accomplishing certain results. While it is the client's primary responsibility to win over those who disagree, we as consultants can and should help to educate people about what our clients are trying to accomplish. When we find ourselves with people who "don't get it," we can act as an advocate for our clients by helping to explain the reasons for change, the thinking behind the approach, or the logic of decisions that were made. Many resistors simply want to understand why things are being done as they are before they commit to action. Our clients can't talk to every individual or group personally. Memos to the entire workforce and large-group communication sessions only go so far in answering specific questions that individuals pose. When we help enlist the support of key individuals or groups, we're helping to drive change in the organization by playing the advocate role.

> Building the sense of confidence and readiness senior leaders need can take many forms.

Nothing is more frustrating for a consultant than to have a client back away from key decisions or initiatives owing to a sudden lack of confidence. Given the stress of the change process, it is likely that our clients will become caught in gusts of self-doubt along the way. The questions for you, the consultant, are (1) Can you see the self-doubt coming? and (2) What should you do about it?

Organization change must be approached as a marathon, not as a sprint. It will test a leader's endurance and perseverance as well-grooved patterns of comfort and familiarity are dismantled and it begins to feel like all hell has broken loose. The seasoned consultant will build into her relationship with a leader an allowance for such storms and establish herself as an ally and an advocate. The natural impulses to ease the pain and return to feelings of normalcy will intensify as the turbulence of change tests a leader's tenacity and commitment. At the same time, the organization needs to see tangible effects of a trusted advisor's input in the form of changed behavior. That way, when the time for the consultant to help champion the leader's views and decisions in the organization comes, there won't be concerns that the consultant is merely colluding with the leader.

There are four components of offering leaders the support they need when turbulence hits.

Help Leaders Acknowledge and Explore Their Apprehension

There is good reason to worry if a leader never feels uneasy during a major change process. The challenge is helping leaders to acknowledge their uneasiness and to recognize the potential pitfalls it might lead to should they buckle under when the change process gets tough. Most leaders face their worst feelings of apprehension the moment they begin to see the faces of those around them wince at the thought of significant change. In the beginning, there is always great excitement about a new initiative, the heat of protracted, often radical change brings an onslaught of protests followed by comments that distance the speaker from the change process and its consequences. That's when leaders can get a tad weak in the knees.

These are the moments when a trusted confidant's advocacy can make a significant difference. In order to step into the role of advocate, you need to be able to have the sort of conversation with a client in a tight spot that will enable him to choose the best course and give him the strength to stick to it.

Provide Genuine Encouragement at Crossroads

Many people fall prey to the naïve assumption that leaders at the top of organizations in positions of great influence have unwavering confidence and tenacity. Nothing could be further from the truth. As one of our colleagues told us, "It's clear that sometimes clients are apprehensive about acting in unfamiliar territory or when they don't know what to do. The courage to act doesn't come from being 'in control' so much as in feeling confident and ready for whatever happens."

Building the sense of confidence and readiness senior leaders need can take many forms. Depending on the personality of the leader, and the context in which he or she is attempting significant change, it is important to choose an approach that best matches the needs of the client. Otherwise, you risk genuine encouragement being interpreted as saccharine, condescending, gratuitous, or presumptuous.

Help Leaders Stay the Course When it Counts

The third aspect of advocacy is to work with the leader to get the change embedded as deeply as possible into the organization. This becomes especially important in places where there is inherent resistance to, even rebellion toward, change—especially in outlying locations. Many leaders, on the heels of initiating major change, will prematurely declare victory and minimize the need to pursue the rest of the change agenda. Then, when they are blindsided by some significant event that signals that the change is faltering, the leader embarks on an appeal campaign that usually only undermines his credibility. In despair, the leader may reverse course and find some face-saving way to raise the white flag, usually under the guise of "responding to more immediate strategic needs" or "re-evaluating priorities given current business conditions." The sad consequence of such failures is that the organization is now further disabled from future change.

The proactive consultant will help her client anticipate those places where change is likely to struggle for survival and develop a plan to head off any significant threats of sabotage. Together, client and consultant work to find ways to leverage their respective roles as leader and change expert to build the organization's commitment to, understanding of, and ownership of the change.

Help Clients Recognize When They Have Done Well

Amazing as it may seem, clients often don't recognize their own strengths in leading change. Being an advocate involves helping them understand when their actions are having the intended impact. When a client makes a key decision, gives an impassioned speech, deftly handles a difficult situation with a subordinate, chooses to involve others appropriately, or calls attention to the need for metrics to assess progress, it's important to let him know he has done something right. Behavior that is positively reinforced is more likely to be repeated. Calling attention to things that clients do right encourages them to demonstrate behaviors that produce change in the future. What's more, positive feedback restores self-confidence during times of doubt. Clients are more likely to "stay the course" if they are being complimented for the difficult steps they have taken. We are not talking about insincere flattery or other obvious ploys to engender closeness. We are talking about complimenting clients when they really deserve it. Never underestimate your clients' need to know that you are on their side. If you have earned enough of their trust to give them the bad news, you must also work hard to bolster their spirits when their determination begins to waver.

Supporting your clients and being an advocate on their behalf is important because it expands the energy clients have for change and the degree of risk they are willing to tackle. Leaders usually have very few true advocates; they have subordinates, who are sometimes supportive and sometimes skeptical. And they have peers, who are willing to lend a hand when asked. A few very fortunate leaders have mentors, who guide them through difficult decisions and come to their aid without being asked to do so. But most leaders are lonely at the top. Helping leaders navigate the rough spots of change, guiding them to pick and chose their battles wisely, and advocating their decisions to key stakeholders whose support is essential, can go a long way toward making the otherwise lonely-at-the-top job of leading radical change meaningful and effective for leaders and their organizations.

Curating Employee Experience Through Design

By Mindy Millward

Meeting my client at the local coffee shop had become a ritual for us in the past year. She had moved into the executive suite in a new organization which had a reputation for struggling – with performance, each other, and their CEO. Her history gave great promise to turning it around though as she was known for being a "people person" and past teams she had led had engaged productive employees. But, between sips of her cappuccino, she disclosed her frustration. The team was not turning around, and she had just gotten her Employee Experience scores back. Not only was her team still miserable, but it was also now on her watch.

As I backed her away from the edge of "I should never have taken this on," she began to share what she had been doing to change the tenor and tone and enroll her group. As she told story after story of free-pizza-Fridays and take-your-dog to work days, it became evident that she honestly didn't know why her previous team had been happy nor did she know how to turn this one around.

> We must look deep into our organizational structures and make the changes that will pay much greater dividends than new snacks for the break room.

Once she stopped to breathe, I took her back to twenty-four months ago when we started an organization design process with her previous organization. Ostensibly the process intended to put in place regional P&Ls and change how they serviced customers. But the reality was we had also built and designed an organization that positively influenced employee experience. We didn't just hope the new organization would get results and engage employees but structured it precisely to do so.

In a recent Forbes article, Denise Lee Yohn defines employee engagement as the "sum of everything an employee experiences throughout his or her connection to the organization — every employee interaction, from the first contact as a potential recruit to the last interaction after the end of employment." She goes on to explicitly state that EX is not "employee engagement — that is, employees' commitment to your company and their jobs —EX is the means to that end. Too many companies only pay attention to the results of annual employee engagement surveys and don't proactively design and manage EX to produce better engagement.

As I talked to my client about the true meaning of the concept, her eyes widened and exasperated she said "the sum of everything? Are you kidding me? I should quit now." Her frustration was rooted in the belief that as the leader, she thought she was responsible for defining (and building) every aspect that would influence her employees' experience and the thought was overwhelming. But just like a museum the experience can only be curated, not mandated, or bought. Employee experience is a dependent variable, and each organization (and leader) has to figure out the equation for their people.

On your own, you could invest significant time, dollars, and resources in trying to develop that equation (think of the janitor solving the math problem on the blackboard in Good Will Hunting) or you could use an inclusive process so that your employees design it themselves.

Thinking about EX when designing work processes, structure, jobs, culture, leadership, and people systems as opposed to hoping you get the experience people want after you've finished. This isn't new a new concept – good organization design work has been around for decades. But re-emphasizing some of its core tenants as you start to think about (and be held accountable for) employee experience is critical as increasingly leaders look for shortcuts to making change happen. In particular, it is critical that your organization design work focuses on the following:

1. **Sense of purpose connected to a larger vision –** Why are we here? Increasingly employees want to understand this and make a conscious decision to join (and stay with) an organization that actually believes it has a purpose beyond a CAGR of 10%. This doesn't mean we all need to work in places that are trying to save the world but knowing what we strive for, what motivates us to get up every morning, and what to measure ourselves by is more valuable than we think.

2. **Clarity of strategy, roles, and their connection –** When you start by defining EX as the sum of everything an employee experiences about an organization, it's amazing how likely (even great) leaders will overlook the connection of strategy to everyday work. Yes, strategy can be a far-out concept, hard to draw the lines directly to the job you do at your desk every day. But making that strategy articulate, actionable, clear (most defined by what we say "no" to), and represented in the very structure in which we reside is a first step in making sure EX will be positive.

3. **Work that is more meaningful and productive when done together –** Obviously there is a significant amount of work in organizations that is done by solo contributors but even when we work individually, designing patterns of work that create interaction, recognition, sharing, curiosity, and visibility leads to a more meaningful experience for all.

4. **Governance that creates true connection –** What is most difficult to design in organizations are not the sub-groups to which we belong, but the linkages that bridge those seams. Boundaries between teams or departments necessarily create divisional sense of purpose and function, distinct tasks and performance measures, and evolving (and different) norms, and behavioral expectations. These boundaries lead to insularity and make it difficult to understand others' perspectives, accommodate differences and act for the greater good, and execute in a coordinated fashion. Designing linkages that will counteract the inherent boundary conflict at the seams that structure creates becomes critical for optimal EX.

5. **Opportunities to develop and advance –** Today's employees are much less loyal to a specific job/leader/organization and much must be done to relook at an organization's ability to provide options for movement, development, advancement, and perhaps most importantly, the self-management of one's own career. Designing an organization for mobility, growth, and opportunity is what employees are looking for.

There is no doubt that ping-pong tables and pizza parties can bring a smile to the face of an employee, but they should not be confused with the principles and processes of employee experience management. For that, we must look deep into our organizational structures and make the changes that will pay much greater dividends than new snacks for the break room.

Radical Care: Relationships in Times of Change

By Whitney Harper

The room went silent. My face was bright red and it felt like my heart had been replaced by a maniacal drummer. The only thing keeping me in my seat was the 50+ pairs of eyes staring at me. The conductor had silenced the orchestra, turned to me and asked, "How can you listen when you are talking?"

That simple question took less than five seconds to ask but for a conductor every second matters. Why did he break the rhythm of rehearsal? Because the collective sound of an orchestra requires everyone to be in sync and listening, and clearly I wasn't. This was one of my most visceral radical candor moments. That simple question — "How can you listen when you are talking?" — shaped my listening style in a myriad of situations. I am grateful for that interaction, but wonder if I am willing to give the same candorous feedback.

When coaching leaders, I have reflected on the analogy of conductor and orchestra. To guide the group like a conductor, you must constantly provide clear and direct feedback. But it's not always easy. How do you handle that one team member who is out of rhythm with the rest of the department? How do you challenge directly during times of discord? In our work we see leaders struggle with this mightily and so we turned to author Kim Scott (who we recently featured in our Virtual Summit), because she is an expert on how to give pointed, but caring feedback.. What is radical candor?

What is radical candor?

Kim says that "radical candor" is caring personally while challenging directly. The concept was launched in a talk by Kim Scott and then further defined in her book, Radical Candor. In the book, Kim identifies four quadrants that categorize the different approaches to feedback. Notice the axes – care personally and challenge directly. The sweet spot is to both care personally and challenge directly.

For example, my conductor had invested time in fostering my talents and building my confidence through his support. I knew he cared about me, which allowed me to see past my embarrassment and grasp the value of his feedback. This is radical candor.

Kim shares that the second-best option is obnoxious aggression, which still provides you with the necessary feedback, but lacks the caring. Those are the situations in which you know the person is giving valuable information, but you are so focused on your disdain for the person that you can dismiss the feedback. Ruinous empathy includes the people pleasers, overly caring but not willing to challenge directly. And manipulative insincerity is neither caring nor direct.

What preparation is required to provide radical candor?

Kim simplifies the process into three steps and then illuminates them further in the following quotes from the conversation. (Emphasis ours.)

#1 Solicit feedback and be self-aware

"I think one of the most important things to being a good leader through change is to be humble about what you do know and what you don't know, and to listen to those around you."

"Radical candor is about self-awareness first, and relational awareness second. But the place to start for self-awareness is to ask people what they think. None of us really is self-aware, we rely on each other for self-awareness. So start out by asking people, 'What can I do, or stop doing, that would make it easier to work with me?' "

"And then you've gotta just shut up for at least six seconds. Amazing what people will tell you if you can keep your mouth shut for six seconds. It's a long time."

"And then, last but not least, you have to reward the candor with the feedback. If you say thank you for the feedback, you're never going get any more feedback. So if you agree with what was said, it's pretty easy, you fix the problem. It's harder when you disagree. If you disagree with the feedback, then your next step is to really take a few minutes and focus on what it was that was said that you can agree with. Almost nobody says something we 100% disagree with, so find that 5% area of agreement and focus in on that, talk to the person about that. And then say, "But for the rest of it, I need to think about it and get back to you.""

#2 Focus on the good stuff

"Even when things feel crazy and everybody's stressed out, there are usually more good things than bad things happening. And even if it doesn't seem like it, if you take a minute to look for those good things that people are doing, not in the feedback sandwich kind of sense of things, but in the I really want to let you all know what's happening that I appreciate that is good. So focus on praise next.""

#3 Offer criticism

"Think about your story, what's the time in your career where somebody pulled you aside, told you something, and it served you well for the next decade...what is your radical candor moment, and just go into this conversation in the spirit of I'm going to help this person, I'm going to be helpful, here's where somebody helped me, and I'm going to offer the same thing to this person. And take a moment, when you start the conversation, to state your intention to be helpful. Use whatever... again, don't choreograph it, don't ask somebody else to tell you the words. I'll give you a couple of examples, but don't just use my words, you got to figure out how you can say it.""

"One thing that I find helpful to say is, 'I want to tell you something, because if I were in your shoes, I'd want to know.' Or, 'Let me tell you about a time when I made the same mistake I just saw you make.' Tell your own story. Figure out a way to indicate to the person that you're on their side, and that's why you're telling them.""

How do you deliver the radically candid message?

Keep it quick and direct. Kim provides the 2-minute radical care recipe.

"When you offer criticism, the best way to do it is just in quick, impromptu, two-minute conversations. The nice thing about radical candor is that it's really fast and it's free. The bad thing about radical candor is it takes enormous emotional discipline.""

"So I really think the best thing you can do is be super clear, super quick, and then make yourself totally available to react. There is a time, as a leader, where the best thing you can do is not try to control things but be willing to react. It's more like jazz than a classical symphony, I think, because it's not a controlled environment.""

Radical candor combines caring personally and challenging directly in a clear and succinct message. It can be as quick as a few seconds, as in the case of my conductor, or a 2-minute feedback after a presentation. As Kim highlights, prep work is required in advance to establish that you care, and courage and discipline are required to make it a habit. But the rewards for both yourself as a leader and for those working with you are well worth the effort.

Who are the Newest Employees in the Workforce?

By Josh Epperson

Millennials are the most talked about generation in history, particularly as it relates to them entering the workforce. Turns out though, they are no longer entering the workforce. They're growing up and managing it. And while we know plenty about our new millennial managers, we know less about who they are going to manage.

Post-Millennials comprise 26% of the total US population and are the largest segment by numbers. By 2020 GenZ will comprise one third of the population and within the next decade or less will likely outpace Millennials as the largest generation in the US labor force. With all the Millennial fanfare, it's easy to overlook them.

In their latest book GenZ @ Work: How the next generation is transforming the workplace, authors David and Jonah Stillman, a father-son pair, warn against repeating the historical mistakes made when transitioning from Boomers to Xers or Xers to Millennials. "The risk in not getting to know GenZ is that we will simply treat them like Millennials. Big mistake and it's one that we've made before."

Furthermore, if Millennial managers make that mistake, managing GenZers how they themselves want to be managed, it could be a big problem.

As is often the case during generational transitions, those who need-to-know are scurrying to understand the differences between Millennials and Zers. Simply Google "Millennials and Post-Millennials," and you'll find a plethora of insights about the nuances and differences between them.

- **GenZ is pragmatic. Millennials are idealistic. Gen Z is authentic to a whole new level - more transparent and values-driven than predecessors.**

- **GenZ wants individuality. They're less focused and better multi-taskers than previous generations.**

- **GenZ prefers role hoping to job hopping; on demand versus formal education; face-to-face versus digital means of communicating; and independence over collaboration.**

If you've tracked workplace demographic trends for any length of time, you too are aware that the bulk of these generational conversations highlight differences but fail to show what can be accomplished when their relationship is strong.

At the core of all effective working relationships is the frequent practice of knowing and being known. When the managerial relationship focuses solely on difference, the leader in power knows their subordinate, but their subordinate only knows about their superior. All too often subordinates knowledge about their superiors is gleaned indirectly from leaders other than their direct manager. Let me give you a practical and recent example. I was talking with a leader a couple of layers removed from the CEO. He could count his interactions with him over the past few years, on one hand. Here's what made the difference.

College football is in my blood. It's in my family's blood. In a passing conversation with our CEO, I mentioned a big upcoming game. He too loves college football and was eager for these teams to face off. The brief connection felt great. But it wasn't until he sent me a text message, the week of the game, remembering our conversation and equal love of the sport that I thought to myself: He's a really good man. He's a great leader.

Whether you lead Boomers, Xers, Millennials or Zers, the managerial conversation must move from difference to what actually brings you both together. Here are a few suggestions to help managers come together in the face of great difference – generational preferences or otherwise.

> By 2020 GenZ will comprise one third of the population and within the next decade or less will likely outpace Millennials as the largest generation in the US labor force.

You're in this together. No really, you are. When your managerial interactions are focused solely on your differences, each of you will constantly look for data to bolster your case and you'll miss all that is held in common. The best way to build togetherness is to define the value you're capable of and why you must create it together. Move beyond me/you distinctions and ensure the "us" of your working relationship is centered on value creation. The value on behalf of your Division, Department, Function or Company. Aligning on the potential value between you creates motivation and business rationale outside of your individuality to work toward.

Expect give and take. There's never a one-size-fits-all when it comes to how managers help their teams succeed. However, the imbalance in power between superior and subordinate often renders the managerial relationship one-sided. Depending on your context and business environment, you may have to overemphasize how "moving forward requires both of us to give a little." You may manage best with formal email communication. You may like to track leaders' progress via well thought out status updates, framed in complete sentences with correct punctuation. However, if that's not your leader's jam, you will likely need to create space for her to use pithy emoji-based updates and unannounced drop-ins when you must be available on the fly to go deep on the topic. If it's one-sided, and overly verbose, the post-millennials you manage will undoubtedly respond – TL:d/r.

Celebrate togetherness. A long journey is made up of many short steps. Keep an eye out for the little wins along the way and call attention to how those are shaping the interactions and outcomes between you and those you lead. It's often the mundane that binds leaders together and plays an outsized role in the future you both desire. I think the leader who referenced the football conversation with his CEO was attempting to celebrate such a win. In a subsequent interaction, I was able to feed that mundane win back to the CEO and join the celebration with them.

These concepts are true when creating "togetherness" between all leadership relationships. However, they are particularly timely for the relationship between Millennials and GenZers. Millennials have been known to jump from one job to the next, but that's changing as they "send roots down." Similarly, GenZers will likely stay where they are, opting for new roles in existing companies. Both generations are "staying put" longer than in the past, which means companies and business can't overlook this challenge and opportunity. In the past, if the relationship didn't work, you just looked for something else. Today that's not the case.

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