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Dear Reader,

Welcome to our Articles to Reflect, the new format of our LIM News. This month, we feature a preview of Ernie Turner's upcoming book, ***Gentle Interventions: Tools and Tips for Coaching Teams***. In his new book, Ernie shares a collection of easy interventions that make a big difference in team performance. Stay tuned and enjoy this preview!

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Editor

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Stop and Reflect

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The Power of Reflection

Turning 5 Minutes into 10

by Ernie Turner



How can we demonstrate the power of reflection as a means of engaging both introverts and extroverts thus giving everyone an opportunity to speak up?

It was the second day of a leadership development program in Toronto and Pam, head of strategy for the bank, was presenting the bank's strategy for the next two years. She addressed the twenty-four participants and said, "I've got a 15 minute presentation and we need your feedback as you will be the ones implementing this strategy. We need to get it right and your input is critical." The participants in this program were sitting in four project teams, with each comprised of six people, and with each having a business challenge to work on during the course of the program.

I, as their coach, was sitting with my team and was paying close attention to what Pam had to say as I was interested to hear how the bank's strategy might impact my team's project. In fact, all four projects were going to be impacted by the bank's strategy. There was 100% attention as Pam gave a very clear presentation. When she finished she said, "Now I want you to take no more than 5 minutes to discuss this strategy at your tables with your teammates and let me know if you think we're on the right track. I'm just interested in first impressions for now, that's why I'm giving you only 5 minutes."

Jim, the most senior investment banker in the group and a member of my team didn't let a second pass before he launched into a 3-minute analysis of Pam's presentation. As he took a breath to continue, Mary, one of the private bankers, cut him off and shared her perspective, using all of the remaining 2 minutes. The other four members of the team had not had the chance to say one word, when Pam said, "Time. Who's ready?"

Jim's hand went up like a kindergarten kid's waving to catch Pam's attention. She gave him the nod and Jim repeated almost verbatim what he had told his team, before sitting down with a big smile of satisfaction. Mary gave him 'the look' which he ignored. The others on my team looked downcast. I had had a learning moment, but I had to wait until after Pam's session and we were back in our project room before taking advantage of it and sharing it with my team.

When everyone was seated around the project table I said, "Before you jump into your project I have three quick questions to ask that should take no more than 15 minutes to answer. Are you fine with this?" (My contract with the team was to look for learning opportunities and offer timely concepts, tools or feedback). They all agreed to my 15-minute just-in-time offer.

My first question - "How do you think you performed as a team in answering Pam's question?" I first asked Jim who beamed and said, "We aced it; you heard what the others had to say!" Then I turned to Mary who was quick to say, "With all due respect, Jim, you didn't include one thing I said!" Then I asked the others what they thought. The quick consensus was they didn't even have a chance to say a word.

My second question - "How frequently does this happen at the bank?" Several responded in unison, "Almost always."

My third question - "Would you be interested in how you could have extended 5 minutes into 10 so that everyone had a chance to participate?" And again, in unison, "YES!"

"First, you all select a spokesperson by pointing your finger at the person you want to represent the team's views; the person with the most fingers pointing his or her way has been appointed and can accept the appointment or delegate with no questions asked. This takes no more than a few seconds. Then everyone takes the remainder of that first minute to write down his or her thoughts. This first minute actually becomes six minutes because all six members get a minute to think without interruption. The next three minutes are equally divided among all six of you - you each have 30 seconds to very concisely give your point of view. We have no time for sermons. The fifth and last minute is reserved for the person appointed to summarize what everyone has said." They were amazed with the simplicity of this process and used it frequently throughout the program as well as back 'home' with their own teams.

Stop / Reflect / Write / Report (SRWR)

What? This is a time to think and a time to talk. A SRWR gives everyone, introverts and extroverts, an opportunity to gather his / her thoughts and then a chance to share them with the others.

Why? 1) to ensure that everyone participates and we get the insights and wisdom from all; 2) to ensure better ideas because people spend time reflecting (thinking); 3) writing expands and sharpens our thinking.

How?

- Introduce the tool using 4-MAT;
- Give everyone a minute or two to jot down their thoughts and feelings using their journals or post-its if you want to collect their thoughts;
- Go around the room and hear briefly from everyone; adjust the time for reflection and speaking depending upon how much time you have;
- Debrief the process to help individuals understand the purpose and share the impact; help them make connections as to how they can use this tool elsewhere.

So What? This tool has lots of flexibility and can be a substitute for brainstorming as it engages everyone and saves the facilitator the chore of writing down what everyone says as the comments have already been written. It can be used for quick feedback. If the time or the setting are not appropriate for orally sharing what people have written, team members can simply hand their post-its over to the appropriate person to read them later.

Here's a parting question for all of you, our readers: *"How can I adapt this simple reflective technique (SRWR) in my own life - at work as well as with friends and family?"*

Extract from ***Gentle Interventions for Coaching Teams*** by Ernie Turner (forthcoming November 2012)



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