

## Emotional Intelligence and Daily Conversations

Daily conversations are often overlooked as an important piece in the puzzle in building strong relationships. They're frequently lost in the shuffle because, as managers and leaders repeatedly share, "I just don't have time." And while it *is* true we are all perpetually busy, the cost of not carving out moments for these daily conversations is significant. Our haste often ends up costing us more time—not less—in our key relationships.

In a study of 19,000 employees from 29 countries, the Corporate Leadership Council found that one of the most important 'performance levers' in organizations is a manager who is present, who helps provide solutions to day to day challenges and provides employees with informed, fair, accurate, and detailed feedback.

If this is true, then what are some of the ways that we take short cuts? One is by not clearly communicating our expectations.

Ask yourself: how clear are you in the *performance expectations* of your people – in other words, do people know what needs to get done?

What about *behavioural expectations*—do people know not just what to do, but how to do it?

Let's be clear; we're not talking about micro managing—too much watching over anyone's back will drive them crazy. Actually, the opposite is common today—people feel lost about what is expected of them.



As Yogi Berra succinctly said, *'If you don't know where you are going you might end up somewhere else!'* This can lead to enormous tension and complexity where both could be easily avoided.

What else can we do to inoculate against the frequency and pain of difficult and courageous conversations? Show people we value them.

The number one way to do this is not by patronising (a sure sign of guilt). You need to make sure that those around you know that their 'voice' is heard. People need to feel that what they say matters and can make a difference. A US Department of Labour study found that 46% of those who quit their jobs in the last year did so because they felt unappreciated.

Here's the bottom line: difficult and courageous conversations, where we feel 'at risk' simply by having them, require art and skill but they are so much less painful and less frequent when we can do the real work to connect with people on a regular basis.

Just as the flu's effects can sometimes be lessened by recognizing the symptoms and treating them early, we can use our daily conversations as opportunities to recognise the real issues at hand, incorporate some early "treatment," and reduce the need for difficult and courageous conversations.

Leadership by "inoculation"--what a concept!