



The Workplace Electric: Multi-Directional Communication, Connection, and Collaboration

Workshop Outline

The Workplace Electric: Multi-Directional Communication, Connection, and Collaboration

- Four-hour instructor led class (ideal class size 15-35).
- Teaches four distinctions through the use of five exercises. Each distinction set is explored and then adopted and takes about 45 minutes of class time to complete.
- Workshop Objectives:
 - Improve your ability to do your best work by building commonality, tolerance, and interest in people who are younger or older than you are.
 - Learn how to better coach, learn, communicate, connect, and collaborate up and down the generations.
 - Adopt a mindset that catalyzes multi-directional learning and teaming.
 - Learn how to be more coachable and open and improve your opportunities for personal growth and success.
- Materials/Take-Aways:
 - *Coaching Up and Down the Generations*, by Lisa Haneberg
 - A Roadmap for Personal Growth and Impact: One page synopsis of the key points and ways to bring what you learned to your team/department.

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- Introduction/the sell: Imagine a workplace where you got to meet and work with ***fascinating and talented people***, where you tested and developed your intelligence every day, and where you were ***highly sought after*** for input, ideas, coaching, and collaboration. Imagine standing in the center of a busy intersection where ***exciting initiatives and nimble processes*** zoomed by to shape an exciting future. Imagine being a ***critical member*** of one or more super teams – people who do their best work together and ***catalyze each other's*** discovery and growth.

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- ***That would be a pretty awesome workplace, wouldn't it?*** It is possible when you learn how to communicate, connect, and collaborate up and down generations and utilize differences to improve individual and group productivity and growth. We will call this great place ***the Workplace Electric – a super-charged culture and environment*** – and during this workshop you will learn how to amp up your personal influence and increase the velocity of your learning. You will also learn what you can do to help create the Workplace Electric in your department or team.
- There are ***four distinctions*** featured in the workshop...

1. People Are Fascinating



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- Part A: ***They are fascinating***. Small teams of people (as diverse in terms of generations and familiarity as possible) will be given a list of five people of some historical significance. Each team will be asked to select the individual that they know the least about. They will then do a bit of research to seek answers to five questions about their lives and the circumstances that preceded their hallmark contributions. During this short exercise, each team will find themselves “falling in love” with the person they chose to research. Examples of people to be listed:
 - Grandma Moses
 - Frances Perkins
 - Nando Parado
 - K4 – The Fourth King of Bhutan

1. People Are Fascinating

- Part B: ***You are fascinating.*** Team members will be assigned a number. Everyone will draw a number and ask two provocative questions to interview the team member associated with that number. The exercise will continue until everyone has both asked and answered two questions.
- ***The Distinction:*** The purpose of this exercise is to start the workshop by demonstrating how fascinating people are – all people – and by helping each person practice asking questions that help them get to know their team members in a whole new way.
- ***Bottom Line:*** The people you work with are fascinating. Get to know them and allow them to get to know you.

2. People Are Strange



2. People Are Strange

- Part A: **People are strange.** Pairs or trios will be given five strange-but-true news story synopses. They will be asked to get inside the newsmaker's head and make a case for their actions/decisions (one possible set of assumptions, not necessarily the right one).
- Part B: **You are strange.** Each person will share one way that they likely drive their co-workers a little wacky and their assumptions behind this habit/way.
- **The Distinction:** The purpose of this exercise is to build empathy, reduce judgment, and to reduce the unhelpful meaning participants assign to stylistic differences and annoyances.
- **Bottom Line:** You are all highly talented and highly flawed. Half the people around you seem a bit strange and you are a bit strange to many of those with whom you work. Don't let judgment get in the way of connection and collaboration.

3. We Don't Think Like That



3. We Don't Think Like That

- Part A: ***People have unique frames of reference that shape their view of the world.*** Small teams of people (as diverse in terms of generations and familiarity as possible) will be asked to research and answer two questions about each generation starting from Traditionalists and going through to Gen Y. The two questions are:
 - 1) What technological advance or invention was most important to each generation during their late teens (high school years)?
 - 2) At what age did they likely own their first computer? How might this fact impact how they work and think?
- They will also be asked to select a stanza of music from one of three number one hits that they believe describes what was going on for each generation during their late teen years. Each team will report out their findings to the larger group and defend their selections.

3. We Don't Think Like That

- Part B: ***Each person on your team has a unique point of reference and view of reality.*** Each team will be given a challenge that they are to solve and then “teach” the rest of the class. The challenges include:
 - Your team wants to better communicate and collaborate but is not able to spend a lot of time together in the same room. You want to try using web-based communication and project management tools. The challenge is that many on the team are neither aware of nor comfortable using web-based tools at work. Given the differences in work styles and experiences with technologies, how would you approach this challenge? Your solution should optimize the level of comfort, communication, connection, and collaboration on the team. Be specific.
 - The employees in your department “clique” together based on age and experience levels. This is fine when it comes to the after-work martini, but very little learning and collaboration seems to be going up and down the generations. The more experienced professionals have a lot to share with less experienced workers and they have a lot to learn, too. Some of the newer and younger workers could really benefit from learning from some of the experienced professionals and many possess new skills that could benefit others. You have been assembled as a task force to create a plan for ways to optimize departmental learning up and down the generations. What ideas do you have for ways to make multi-directional learning fun and successful?

3. We Don't Think Like That

- Part B: ***Each person on your team has a unique point of reference and view of reality.*** Each team will be given a challenge that they are to solve and then “teach” the rest of the class. The challenges include:
 - The members of your department/group should spend more time getting to know one another to build stronger relationships (think about your first exercise) but they don't have the time! Come up with five ways that your department could build relationships up and down the generations (that do not take a lot of time, effort, or money). Be specific and sell your ideas to your colleagues in the class. Write up your ideas in an email to your department leader (full sentences, your rationale, your ideas, potential next steps) that starts the following way:
 - “As you know, I recently attended a class called ***The Workplace Electric***. I was reminded how valuable it is to build relationships with people who are younger and older than I am, but I know how hard it is to take the time to do so. As part of a team activity, we came up with several ways to build relationships that don't take a lot of time. I thought you might be interested in our ideas, so here they are. I would be happy to share these at the next staff meeting if you are interested.”

3. We Don't Think Like That

- **The Distinction:** The purpose of this exercise is to build awareness about how people from different generations think and experience life and to think about how they can be a part of building more “up and down” communication and learning.
- **Bottom Line:** You create the Workplace Electric. When someone does not think like you do, realize that it is because they don't THINK LIKE YOU DO– your experiences are unique and of your time. You should not expect people to share your assumptions or initial perceptions. By working together, you and your coworkers can build commonality and help each other grow (thereby helping the organization succeed and grow). Communicating, connecting, and collaborating up and down the generations is a fun and fulfilling way to work.

4. We Are Our Coachability



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- Part A: ***Coachability is opportunity.*** Before kicking off this exercise, we will review the characteristics of high and low coachability. Pairs or trios will be asked to think of six examples of high and low coachability (three each) from their recent memory (could be something they observed - no names - or examples from the news). They will also identify the potential impact of these moments.
- Part B: ***You are coachable and uncoachable – and it is a choice.*** Each person will share what tends to trigger their uncoachability and one aspect of their career goals where it will be important for them to be highly coachable if they want to succeed.
- ***The Distinction:*** The purpose of this exercise is to build self-awareness of coachability and to build ownership for being more coachable.
- ***Bottom Line:*** Coachability is your currency for learning. To receive great coaching and support, you need to be coachable. To coach others well, you need to help them be more coachable (and not trigger them!).



The Super-Charged, Open You

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- Final Exercise
 - ***The Workplace Electric is filled with Super-Charged performers.*** Each participant will identify one work practice that he or she feels highly motivated to use and that will contribute to the vision of a Workplace Electric where professionals of all ages and experience levels communicate, connect, and collaborate and help each other grow.
 - They will share their goal as a brief elevator pitch several times as part of a simulated cocktail party type social event (modification of Marshall Goldsmith's FeedForward exercise).

Invitation: Be a Catalyst



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- Final Invitation: Workshop participants will be encouraged to share their key learnings with colleagues, their manager, and others. ***To be a part of the electrical charge that connects everyone.***
- ***Bottom Line:*** What you believe about the nature of great workplace relationships makes a difference. You each play a large role in creating strong learning communities.
- **OBTW:** Everything we have talked about during this workshop relates to people of different opinions, backgrounds, nationalities, or styles.

Information

About the Facilitator

Lisa Haneberg is the Vice President and Organizational Development Practice Leader for MPI Consulting, a boutique firm in Cincinnati, Ohio. Lisa has authored twelve business books including *The High Impact Middle Manager*, *Developing Great Managers*, *Hip and Sage: Staying Smart, Cool, and Competitive in Today's Workplace* and *Coaching Up and Down the Generations*. She has written articles for numerous publications and has a popular management and leadership blog called Management Craft. Lisa regularly leads training sessions and speaks at conferences in the Americas, Europe and Asia. Her clients include GE Aviation, the City of Seattle, TUI Travel, Corbis, Microsoft, Perfetti van Melle, and the Royal Thai Government.

Learn more

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