

Top Trends for Leaders to Notice

The inspiration for this month's Epiphany comes from listening to futurist Anne Lise Kjaer, the closing keynote speaker at this year's International Coach Federation (ICF) conference. Anne told the delegates about eight key trends to help us understand what is changing in our world. She talked about how the combined impact of these trends will require a different kind of coaching.

I was struck by the similar themes that I read in business and leadership articles. For example, a recent Harvard Business Review's Working Knowledge had pieces focused on technology, transparency and social well-being. Such is the context we are working in, and leaders especially need to take time to sit back and look at the big picture. A leader who can skillfully relate what is happening in the world to what is happening in their workplace is better able to motivate, inspire and energize their teams. It's not about charisma so much as alignment and foresight.

Anne said that the future is not some place we go, but a place we create. Here are some thoughts to help you and your teams discuss the eight trends and to lift you out of your pressing, urgent day-to-day task at hand.

- **Total Transparency:** Organizations, especially government, will find that citizens and customers expect full disclosure. This breeds trust and demands openness. What is it that your customers want to know more about? What kinds of communication channels would facilitate this best? Do you create opportunities for dialogue with stakeholders, or are most of your messages delivered in official monologues? As a leader, do you model transparency by talking about upcoming changes, sharing your internal challenges and acting with high trust toward others?
- **Always on and Smart Technology:** These two trends are shifting our time and space constraints. We have unlimited mobility and the freedom to work and connect with others from almost anyplace. Waiting time has become a joy instead of a pain as people surf the web and talk to loved ones in the grocery line. Technology allows for real-time exchanges and constant dialogue. The web never sleeps, and many people sleep with their devices on their pillow! EBay is always open, and universities have on-line courses available 24/7. All this has increased the expectation of fast response – and makes it harder for leaders to thoughtfully plan their position. Leaders must be willing to jump into the fray and share half-formed ideas or risk being left out of the action. Directness and

conciseness must be balanced with comprehensiveness. Give enough information to prevent mishaps, but give it quickly and succinctly. How are you and your team stepping up your response times? Are you available as much as you need to be? What websites, interest groups and discussions should you be a part of?

- **Holistic Well-Being:** A social trend that seems to contradict – or perhaps offset – the “always on” trend, is the move toward lifestyles that nurture us. Many iPhone and Blackberry apps assist us with fitness and health (GPS runners, calorie counters, etc) There is a counter-reaction to the rise in cancer and heart disease that is creating a bicycle and spa culture. Some people are revolting against the always-on trend and take time completely off the grid. Is your company giving staff the time and support to stay active and healthy? Is there access to good food choices at work? Is biking to work a viable option? Is there a ban on weekend texting?
- **Happiness Hunting:** This trend can be seen by the number of books about positive psychology and the research on happiness and its impact on work. Customers and employees want meaningful encounters. The concept of happiness hunting was depicted in the book and movie “Eat, Pray, Love”. How does what you and your team do contribute to the happiness of the customer, the community or the world? How happy are your employees when they are at work? Which stakeholders could you build more meaningful relationships with? How can each meeting be a positive encounter?
- **Cultural Capital:** This is a trend toward making an asset out of local culture. Large companies are touting their ability to adapt to local culture – even embody it. Restaurants are relying on local food producers and showcasing local recipes. People are proud of their communities and wish to support them. How does your company support and nurture local culture? In what ways do you allow your employees to give to their community? How can you customize what you do in each local branch office so that you build local spirit without re-erecting the silos you worked hard to dismantle? Do you celebrate the long-term employees who help create cultural capital inside your organization?
- **Empowerment Brands:** Another marketing trend sees companies leveraging people’s passion. Employees come to work for the social encounter and to play. There is a way that employees want to live the brand from inside the company. How do you encourage “living the brand” at your workplace? Where is the passion and play in your work? Do your employees feel empowered to bring what is important to them to the workplace? As a leader, are you listening and incorporating input from others?

- **Better World:** This trend speaks to the desire we have to participate in building a better future. The Haiti relief effort was one of the first to use cell phone texting to gather donations, and it was a huge success. As a tie to Holistic Well-Being, people want to give their time as volunteers if they can't give money. Companies are being asked to be transparent about their values and how they will make the world a better place. Are you prepared to discuss this? Can you and your team demonstrate how what you do is for the greater good – if not for the globe, at least for the greater good of the whole organization?

Thank you to Anne for an inspiring and information speech. For more information on Anne Lise Kjaer go to her website at kjaer-global.com