



Issue 266 – September 2026



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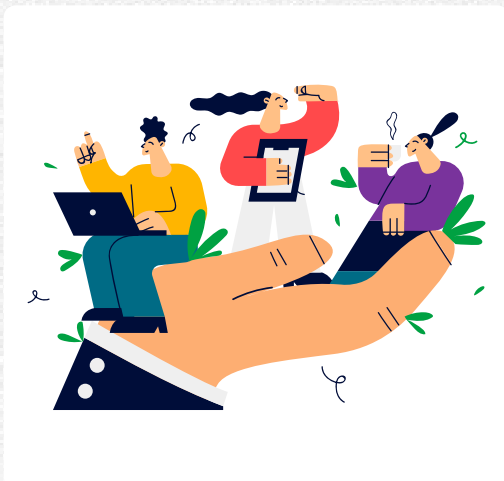
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PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS**Building Influence Through Trust**

I once heard the phrase, “Ability without visibility is a disability.” It’s a phrase that has stayed with me. You can be really good at what you do, but if people don’t know what you’re capable of, you can still get overlooked. So yes, visibility matters.

But visibility can only do so much. People may know who you are and what you’re good at, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they trust you, value your opinion, or feel comfortable being honest with you.

Think about the people who have the most influence on you at work. Are they always the most visible? Probably not. Oftentimes, they’re the people you trust. You know you can speak openly without having to second-guess where they’re coming from. You know they’ll do their best and follow through on what they’ve said. You value what they have to say. And when they need your support, you’re usually happy to step in.

I think that’s what makes some working relationships work so well. There’s less need to prove ourselves or manage how we come across all the time. We know what to expect from each other, and we know we can count on one another.

And from what I’ve seen, that kind of trust is usually built in simple ways.



Take a genuine interest in people



We all have our own priorities and things we're trying to get done. It's easy to go into a conversation thinking about the update we need, the question we want answered, or the task that needs to move forward.

But it makes a difference when we also take an interest in what's happening on the other person's side. What are they trying to achieve? What matters to them? What are they excited about, or struggling with?

It doesn't mean every conversation has to become personal. Sometimes it's simply listening properly, remembering something they told you, or checking in later. People can usually tell when the interest is genuine and when the conversation is only about what we need from them.

Be someone others can count on



I see this in my own team. When I'm away and something comes up, my colleagues will often step in and take care of it rather than leave everything for me to handle when I'm back. And I would do the same for them.

I think that says a lot about trust. Things don't stop just because one person isn't there. There's an unspoken understanding that we'll look out for each other and help where we can.

Being reliable is important to build trust over time. If you say you'll do something, do it. If plans change, let people know. If someone helped, acknowledge them. If you made a mistake, own it. These may seem like small things, but over time, this is how people come to know that they can count on you.





Be someone people can be honest with

Some of the people I trust most at work are also the ones who will tell me when they think differently. And I value that.

When there isn't much trust, we tend to be more careful. We hold back, soften what we really think, or avoid saying something because we're not sure how the other person will take it. It feels different when the trust is there. We can say, "I don't agree," or even "I got this wrong," without worrying that one difficult conversation will affect the whole relationship. It's easy to get along when we agree. But being able to be honest with each other and still work well together afterwards is what makes the relationship stronger.

In the end, visibility still matters. People need to know what you can do. But being seen is only the beginning. It's the trust we build through working together that makes people value our contribution, listen to what we have to say, and want to work with us again. And that carries much further than visibility alone.



By Xin Yuan Low

Director, Solution Innovation & Excellence

TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

The Teams People Speak Up In



Have you ever asked a question in a meeting and been met with silence? You might assume there are no concerns. Everyone agrees. The team is aligned.

But silence does not always mean agreement. Sometimes, it means people are deciding whether it is safe to say what they really think.

In my work with teams, I have noticed that open communication rarely happens simply because a leader says, "My door is always open." People pay more attention to what happens after someone speaks up. Does the leader become defensive when challenged? Does a different opinion get explored or quickly dismissed? Does the same confident person dominate every discussion? When someone admits a mistake, is the first response curiosity or blame?

These small moments teach a team what is safe to say and what is better left unsaid.



Psychological safety is not about everyone agreeing – A psychologically safe team is not necessarily a comfortable team. There can still be disagreement, difficult feedback and challenging conversations.

The difference is that people can say, **"I see this differently," "I think we may be missing something," or "I made a mistake"** without worrying that doing so will damage their credibility or relationships.

This matters because effective teams need more than cooperation. They need healthy debate. When people can question assumptions and raise concerns early, teams are more likely to identify problems before they become bigger ones.



Leaders also need to pay attention to whose voices are being heard.

Quieter team members may have valuable perspectives but need more space to enter the conversation. Instead of asking, “Any thoughts?” and waiting three seconds, try: “We have heard a few perspectives. What might we be overlooking?” Or invite people who have not spoken to contribute, without putting them on the spot.

A quick leadership check

Before your next team meeting, ask yourself:

- Do I listen fully before responding to a different opinion?
- Do I actively create space for quieter voices?
- Do I ask questions that invite disagreement, not just agreement?
- When someone raises a problem, do I become curious before becoming corrective?
- Can people acknowledge mistakes without being embarrassed or blamed?
- Do I thank people for raising difficult issues, even when I do not agree with them?
- Am I modelling openness by admitting when I do not know, need help or have changed my mind?

Ultimately, leaders cannot demand honest communication. They create the conditions for it. And sometimes, the best measure of team effectiveness is not how quickly everyone agrees but how safe people feel to disagree.



By Shalini Gunarajan

Senior Consultant, Human Dynamic Malaysia

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Recognition Is a Catalyst for Motivation



In many organizations, the challenge isn't a lack of motivation. It's whether people feel seen, valued, and acknowledged.

People work hard, quietly solve problems, support colleagues, and carry invisible responsibilities yet barely hear anything encouraging until something goes wrong. Over time, that silence sends a message: contribution is expected, but not necessarily valued.

Recognition is often treated as a reward after performance. Its deeper function is to help sustain performance. It is a form of communication that tells people, "Your effort was seen. Your contribution mattered. You belong here." Motivation is shaped not only by targets or compensation, but also by whether people connect their work to meaning and impact.

Research supports this connection. A Gallup and Workhuman longitudinal study tracking 3,447 employees found that well-recognized employees were 45% less likely to have left their organization two years later (Gallup & Workhuman, 2024). In a field experiment involving more than 300 workers, unexpected public recognition significantly increased subsequent performance on a short-term data-entry task (Bradler et al., 2016). Recognition is therefore more than a morale booster. Used strategically, it can contribute to employee engagement, retention, and organizational effectiveness.



The quality of recognition matters. "Good job" may feel pleasant, but it offers little useful information. Intentional recognition is specific, timely, and credible:

Notice the contribution:

What did the person do?

Name the impact:

Who or what benefited?

Connect it to purpose:

Why did it matter to the team or organization?



For example: "You noticed the risk early and brought it to the team before it became a client issue. That helped us respond with clarity."

Recognition should not flow only from managers to employees. Team members often see contributions that leaders miss, especially in hybrid teams. A sincere thank you, an acknowledgment in a meeting, or a private message naming someone's support can strengthen trust and belonging. Research suggests that expressions of gratitude can encourage continued contribution by reinforcing an individual's sense of being valued and appreciated. Offering recognition can also prompt the giver to notice team progress, interdependence, and reconnect with a shared sense of purpose and their own motivation.



For organizations, the task is not another awards program. The goal is to make recognition an integral part of how work happens, woven into check-ins, project debriefs, team meetings, and everyday collaboration. At the same time, recognition must be fair and inclusive. When it consistently favours visibility, proximity to leadership, or headline results, quieter yet equally valuable contributions can easily go unnoticed.

Reflection

Whose dependable contribution have we started taking for granted?

What behaviours are our current recognition habits encouraging?

What can I acknowledge today specifically, sincerely, and without waiting for a formal occasion?



Recognition is not an extra task after the real work. It is one of the ways organizations make good work visible and make people want to keep contributing.

Reference

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By Ryan Peter

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WELLNESS CORNER

Protecting Relationships During Stressful Periods



When work piles up and deadlines get tight, good communication is usually the first thing we drop. Heavy pressure triggers our defensive survival instincts in the nervous system. Instead of working together smoothly, we might unintentionally snap at coworkers, assume the worst, or go silent and withdraw from the conversation. Yet strong relationships are not just nice to have. They are the true foundation for trust, team health, and long-term success.



Stress also travels home easily. When we bring tense work habits and communication patterns into our personal lives, we end up hurting the people who care about us most. Protecting these vital connections does not mean you must remove all stress from your life. It means building emotional awareness. By pairing simple mindfulness practices with the insights of Nonviolent Communication (NVC), you can transform quick-tempered reactions into calm and meaningful connection.

Four Habits for Mindful & Compassionate Communication Under Stress

Use the S.T.O.P. Tool to Defuse Reactivity: Before you reply to an upsetting message or jump into an argument, pause your nervous system. Stop what you are doing. Take a grounding breath or take a moment. Observe what you feel and notice in your mind and body without judging the experience. Proceed with a clear intention.



Focus on Facts Instead of Stories: When we feel stressed, we often guess other people's motives and assume the worst. Stick strictly to facts. For example, replace "You do not care about my input" with "I noticed we have not yet discussed my feedback on this proposal draft."

Align Real Needs Instead of Blame: Blaming someone puts them on the defensive. Sharing your needs helps them understand you. Instead of saying, "Stop interrupting my day," say: "When meetings get added at the last minute, I feel anxious because I need focused time and energy to finish this report." That invites collaborative teamwork rather than conflict.



Build an End-of-Day Transition Buffer: Give yourself five minutes between ending work and joining your household. A short walk or a few mindful breaths lets your body drop workday tension. This simple break keeps job stress from spoiling family time.

Maintaining Strong Connections Every Day

Great communication is a daily habit, especially during hard times. When you pause, distinguish facts and observations from judgments, and explain what you need and value, you protect your most important bonds and relationships. Pressure will still happen, but you can use it to build deeper trust at work and at home.

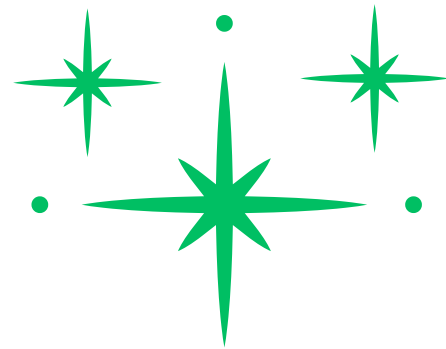


Karson Wong

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LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Leading Through Everyday Moments



When we think about leadership, we often think about the big moments – setting strategy, making important decisions, leading change or addressing a crisis.

But some of the strongest signals we send as leaders happen in much smaller moments.



How we respond when someone makes a mistake. Whether we listen fully when an employee raises a concern. What we do when priorities change. Whether our actions match what we say we value.

I've found that these everyday moments can have a bigger impact on how people experience their leaders and ultimately, their workplace culture. The leadership challenge is often not knowing what to do. It is being intentional about how we show up in the moments that happen every day.



A few everyday moments that stay with me:

When someone brings a problem

It can be tempting to jump straight into solution mode. I've found that simply asking, "Tell me more about what's happening," can change the conversation. It gives the person space to think, rather than making them feel that they have to arrive with the answer already.

When priorities suddenly change

In fast-moving environments, priorities will inevitably shift. One thing I've learned is that communicating the *why* behind a change can be just as important as communicating the change itself. People may not always agree with a decision, but understanding the context helps create alignment.



When someone makes a mistake

This is one of those moments where a leader's response can stay with a person. Instead of immediately asking, "*What went wrong?*", I try to understand what happened and what we can learn from it. The goal is accountability without creating a culture where people are afraid to speak up or try something new.

When words and actions need to match

If I say something is important, my actions need to reflect it. If I commit to something, I try to follow through or communicate early when circumstances change. These may seem like small things, but consistency is how credibility is built over time.





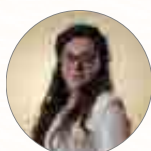
When someone does good work

Recognition doesn't always need to be formal. I've found that being specific - acknowledging what someone did and the impact it had makes appreciation much more meaningful. People want to know that their contribution was noticed.

When a conversation feels difficult

Some of the most important leadership moments are the uncomfortable ones. Slowing down, listening fully and choosing curiosity over assumption can make a difficult conversation feel very different. Sometimes, the pause before responding is the leadership behaviour that matters most.

Leadership culture isn't created only through major initiatives or leadership programmes. It is shaped in the everyday interactions that happen when no one is calling them "leadership moments." For me, the reminder is simple: say what you mean, do what you say, and pay attention to how your actions make people feel. We may not remember every conversation we have as leaders but our teams often remember how those conversations made them feel.



By Sufiya Suhail

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