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a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

TRANSPARENCY IN LEADERSHIP

Years ago when I was appointed executive director of a fourteen county nonprofit organization, I discovered quickly that my staff wanted to know the truth about everything: Relationship status with stakeholders; job responsibility shifts; government funding levels short and long term; programmatic goals. This was important to them so they could plan, protect themselves, and do their best work.

As a boss, over time I saw the organizational benefits to honesty and openness. Truth telling created a strong culture in which our team banded together to make decisions,



solve problems, and achieve results faster and more easily than if I'd kept folks in the dark. I watched people appreciate—and enthusiastically utilize-- the talents and skills each one brought to the table. With a collaborative spirit, I saw them approach conflict directly. I felt them trust me. While things weren't perfect, life was good. In this environment rich with learning and proactivity we experienced minimal tension and got a lot done. What I remember most? We had fun doing it!

People generally don't like surprises. If you want higher levels of performance, you must be clear, frank, and real. Transparency is power.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

TRANSPARENCY: PREREQUISITE FOR CREDIBLE LEADERSHIP

One of the biggest mistakes you can make as a leader is to withhold reality from your employees, volunteers, and Board. If you're clutching certain things close to your chest, ask yourself why. Are you trying to protect somebody or preserve your job? Are you attempting to elevate your authority, get your own way, or play games? Know that your objectives define YOU, your identity, and your leadership brand. Hidden agendas are deadly. Not sure how to increase your transparency? Start implementing at least two of the following strategies now:

1. Let people know you.

Whether in person or via social media, allow your core values to determine your conduct. When interacting with others, let your personality shine. Share appropriate snippets of information about your life outside the office. Disclose your bucket list or a special dream. Be vulnerable.

2. Communicate company direction.

Employees cannot function effectively if they don't know, understand, and support the CEO's vision for the organization. If you're at the top, you've got to tell folks where you—and they—are going. Expecting them to read your mind is unfair to everybody and stymies meaningful progress.

3. Seek authentic feedback.

Create a culture in which people feel safe enough to tell you what

they really think. Then find plenty of opportunities to ask. Remember that polished, superficially politically correct opinions are useless. Let folks know you want the real deal, and smile while you say it.

4. Keep your promises.

Adopt this rule of thumb: Don't make a promise you either can't keep or don't intend to keep. Whatever you say you'll do, you must do it. If you renege on your commitments, large or small, you lose leadership credibility. Each promise matters.

5. Dare to deliver bad news.

If you're in a leadership position, you have to be able to discuss the good and the bad in team meetings, individual conversations, and emails. People's trust in you increases when they know you don't hold back. Use discretion and common sense, though. Watch your choice of words and voice tone, and always offer hope even in the worst of circumstances.

6. Reveal your mistakes.

Covering up your mistakes is a fast track to self destruction. When you realize you made the wrong decision about something, admit it. Use the situation as an opportunity to teach staff or volunteers about the importance and components of critical thinking.

7. Initiate fierce conversations.

Pretending that you don't need to confront your star manager about her missed project deadline is unacceptable. Choosing to turn your head and look the other way when you witness obvious verbal abuse is wrong. Muster your courage and face these issues. Ignoring them exacerbates your problems.

I want to be candid here: I am a stickler for transparency. As an executive, I held myself to high standards. I urge you to do the same. Your attempts to weasel, hide, fake, or dodge will come back to bite you. Count on it.

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What Clients Say

I hired Sylvia because I was having difficulty establishing rapport with the members of my management team. This issue created a lack of cohesion within

the team itself and negatively impacted individual job performance as well as overall agency function. Soon into the coaching engagement I realized that my lifelong tendency to remain private and to wear masks contributed to the problem. I've always had a fear of allowing myself to be vulnerable in front of people I supervise. As a result, these folks didn't trust me or each other. Sylvia helped me to see the damage this behavior was causing. She gave me strategies for appropriately showing more of my true self to staff. As I used those ideas, I began to observe positive changes in relationships and work related results.

- Janice H., Human Services, PA

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Offers and Opportunities

SHINE THE LIGHT Strategy Session

Want twenty minutes of Sylvia's time, attention, and expertise to clarify how YOU must implement greater transparency at work to get better and different results? This month you can be the recipient of one of the two FREE strategy sessions Sylvia is offering to ezine readers only. Just send her a private email message expressing your interest at sylvia@launchinglives.biz no later than midnight on August 15. It's amazing what twenty minutes on the phone can do to improve relationships, enhance work flow, and impact the bottom line.

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RESOURCES

IF YOU READ ONLY ONE LEADERSHIP BOOK: THIS IS IT

Elizabeth Pagano dedicates each chapter of her book, *The Transparency Edge*, to teaching readers how to build and sustain a highly productive and deeply human work environment through open and honest leadership. If you have time to read only one resource on the topic, this is it. Available in paperback on Amazon.com since 2005 for about \$14.00.

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TIP

Take out your magnifying glass and get clear about where you are being less transparent than you ought to be or less honest than others expect. This may make you squirm a bit, but it has to be done if you're truly serious about standing taller in leadership. After you've identified the specific area of challenge, decide what you're going to do about it—and when. The longer you wait to initiate change, the deeper you dig your hole. No kidding: Your reputation is on the line.

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Where in the World is SYLVIA?

On August 6, 2014 Sylvia presented an interactive thirty minute program on building business confidence to the Cumberland County Council of Republican Women during their regular monthly dinner meeting held at the Appalachian Brewery in Mechanicsburg, PA. Twenty women participated.

On August 9, 2014 Sylvia participated in a dynamic one hour radio show hosted by Myles Miller of Harrisburg. To listen to this podcast click this link and then click again on 8/9/14. There are four segments.

<http://www.whp580.com/media/podcast-myles-of-success-MylesofSuccess/>

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Join Sylvia on these social networks!

About This Ezine

The purpose of this Ezine is to: 1) Provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to personal and professional growth as well as overall career development; and 2) Invite readers to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

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Launching Lives Ezine is dedicated to “building people ... building businesses.” ©2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014

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About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, LLC, specializes in career development for both corporate and nonprofit executives and managers. Based in South Central PA, she specifically supports clients as they upgrade their current job performance, seek a promotion, or plan/navigate a career transition. What makes her services unique is that Sylvia helps people to cope with change, loss, and grief as they work on developing their careers. Her professional background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, nonprofit community health program start-up, program evaluation, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A certified executive coach through The Rescue Institute in Golden, Colorado and Quantum Endeavors in Chicago, Illinois (plus a participant in extensive continuing education opportunities with several coaches of national notoriety), Sylvia offers individual and group coaching, assessments, teleseminars, workshops, keynote speeches, and retreats. She also has created tangible and downloadable products that augment her coaching and speaking services.

For more information and to connect with Sylvia try:

[Launching Lives Website](#)

[Click to contact Sylvia by Email](#)

Reach Sylvia by phone at **717-761-5457**

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives, LLC is a full service career development company for

managers and executives located in South Central PA. Utilizing a holistic approach to service provision, Launching Lives focuses on supporting clients as they create the platinum level career they desire by upgrading their job performance, seeking a promotion, or planning/navigating a career transition

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching may be the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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