

Highly Leveraged Moments: Enhancing the Quality of Internal Life in the Workplace

Activity Summary

Executives, managers, supervisors, and employees are introduced to three simple questions to enable them to leverage any one moment to enhance the quality of their internal life at work.

Goals

- To enable participants to shift perspective, connect with meaningfulness, and increase adaptability at any given moment.
- To practice these shifting perspectives in a typical work setting.

Group Size

4 to 100 participants. It is recommended that participants comprise one level within an organization for maximum benefit, for example, all managers.

Time Required

2 to 3 hours.

Materials

- A slide projector and screen, or overhead projector, or flip chart, depending on the size of the group.
- A copy of Highly Leveraged Moments: Ten Possible Scenarios for the facilitator.
- Markers for the medium used.

Physical Setting

Groups of 6, 8, or 10 participants seated at tables.

Facilitating Risk Rating

Low.

Process

1. Briefly explain the goals of the activity.
2. Begin by asking participants to list several words that might describe a positive quality of life at work, such as meaningful, connected, or uplifting. Capture these on the flip chart.
3. Continue with these rhetorical questions:
 - “What if we could easily connect with those qualities and experience them at any moment during a typical workday?”
 - “What prevents us from having these types of moments?”
(10 minutes.)
4. Read this quote from Pamela Rogash, serenity consultant:

“Life is lived in instances. In the end, there are only the moments—punctuated by the pauses in between. When you are in a moment where there is a choice to be made, think about what you would want to endure—the pettiness or upset, or a sense of calm and strength. Treasure the moments. They are your life.”
5. Introduce the challenge and context for this exercise by making the following points:
 - Most people become immersed in the details of the day, caught up in the turbulent current of business energy. When in the middle of the workplace whirlpool, we lose sight of the big picture and forget how work fits into our life vision and purpose.
 - When crises occur or priorities shift, most of us resist change, dreading to let go of the familiar, struggling to adjust to the new order of things.
 - At work most of our attention is external. Some people take quiet time either to meditate, engage in Tai Chi, or find some way to shut off the chatter of the outside world when they are away from work. Reports reveal that this internal reflection time actually supports increased

efficiency and productivity. So why not also include this as part of our natural routine at work?

- Imagine what it would be like if we could exercise our “quality of internal work life” muscle regularly so we could take change in stride, be open to new experiences, experience flow, and find what life deals us as having value.
- Before Western business culture influenced some Japanese companies, employees in Japan were encouraged to take a break during which “employees think, read, meditate, or practice anything to keep them in ‘the learning posture’” (Manabu Shisei O Tamotsu). People who maintained “the learning posture” were said to deal more flexibly with change (Belf & Ward, 1997).

6. Say:

“The exercise we will practice today collapses the 15-minute break into a moment, replicable many, many times a day, requiring no special place, time, or equipment.

“*Knowledge* is gained from *external* sources. *Wisdom* emerges from *internal* sources. This exercise will be mostly internal. It will introduce you to a way of initiating a “highly leveraged moment” to access your internal awareness in order to enhance the quality of your internal world at work. This process is internally driven. It is not intended to enhance skill at scanning futurist predications, generating market forecasts, designing technology think tanks, or anything else with an external focus. Remember, focus on the internal does not substitute for focus on the external; it complements it.”

Take comments on the concept.

(10 minutes.)

7. Say to participants:

“During this activity, you will learn three simple questions that will enable you to shift perspective at any given moment. Such a shift in perspective opens the space for additional meaningful experiences at work, something we all want more of. We will practice using these questions by visualizing typical work scenarios in which they would be useful.”

8. Show the following questions, on a slide, transparency, or flip chart:

- What is bigger than the issue of the moment?
- Why is that important?
- (Repeat) Why is that (referring to your answer) important?
- What might happen if I became still (quiet) for one moment NOW?

9. Explain the three levels of interaction or connection.
 - Individual (self)
 - Dyad (another)
 - Group (the larger whole)

(10 minutes.)
10. Select one individual level scenario from the Highly Leveraged Moments: Ten Possible Scenarios listing. Begin guiding the participants on a mini visualization, first making the following suggestions:
 - Close your eyes as I read the scenarios so that you can imagine them better.
 - Feel free to add information in your mind that makes a scenario more real and appropriate to your work situation.
 - The process will work better if you have nothing on your laps and uncross your arms and legs. Basically, get as comfortable as you can in your chair before I begin.
11. Guide participants through a brief visualization. Take about 4 to 5 minutes for the entire process.
 - Use the first minute to guide them to relax and feel comfortable: "Breathe deeply and bring your awareness internally to your body and breath, allowing your inhaled breaths to move to any places where you might be holding tension and allowing your exhaled breaths to carry the tension out of your body."
 - Use the next minute to present one of the scenarios, adding sensory details to enhance the experience. For example, mention sounds, sights, textures, smells that might be present. Embellish by using your company's setting and current or future situation to make the scenario more real.
 - In the third minute, guide them to imagine one of the questions and experience the shift.
 - In the final minute ask them to return to the present setting and come back fully alert.
12. Allow 3 minutes for participants to form dyads and share and discuss the experience. Take a few points from their discussions to be sure everyone is on the right track and has asked the questions mentally.

(10 minutes.)

13. Repeat this 8-minute sequence (5-minute guided visualization and 3-minute discussion) at least five times, varying the level of interaction and the scenario used.
(40 minutes.)
14. Take a 10-minute break.
15. Guide participants through the last four scenarios using the same sequence.
(30 minutes.)
16. To harvest the learning after visualizations are completed, ask participants the following questions:
 - What have you learned from this experience?
 - How will you implement what you have learned?(10 minutes.)
17. Ask if there are any questions. Summarize with these points:
 - The body does not know the difference between what is real and what is imaginary. When we visualize, our body experiences the same thing as if it were happening in real time.
 - Visualization predisposes us to mentally engage in both the actions and the well-being experienced during the visualization. During a visualization, neural pathways are established that make the behavior and sense of well-being familiar when what has been visualized actually occurs.
 - We have control over our internal state. We can disengage from a negative state in a moment by remembering the questions.
 - One moment can make a big difference in our state of mind.
 - By using any of the three questions at the appropriate time, we can gain perspective about our immediate situation.
 - What goes on inside can become our external reality. Altering our internal state impacts our external.
 - We have choices in any given moment.

Variations

- Choose from the prepared scenarios or create different scenarios tailored to your organization.

- Ask participants during the break to identify some scenarios that cause stress at work and use these for the final set of visualizations.
- After asking participants this question, “What prevents us from creating these meaningful experiences?” invite them to brainstorm possible scenarios that might, or do, occur that keep them from having the quality of work life they desire. Use these scenarios in lieu of prepared ones.
- As part of the announcement of the workshop, ask participants to think about what keeps them from experiencing well-being at work and to bring a few examples of what happens to the workshop. Use these examples for the visualizations.

References

- Belf, T. (2002). *Coaching with spirit: Allowing success to emerge*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer, pp. 34–36.
- Belf, T., & Ward, C. (1997). *Simply live it up: Brief solutions*. Bethesda, MD: Purposeful Press, p. 27.

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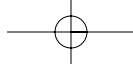
Highly Leveraged Moments: Ten Possible Scenarios

Individual

- Your computer has developed a glitch. It freezes up when you open your word-processing program, and after rebooting the system, you have to deal with error messages and no one is available in IT to help you.
- You misplaced or lost an important file you need for a meeting in about 45 minutes. Your boss entrusted it to you so that you could read through it to prepare for the meeting. You've searched your desk and retraced your steps from his office to yours. The file is too sensitive to be left lying about.
- A deadline approaches for a presentation with high stakes, and you are not fully prepared. You cannot find the data you need that you assumed was on the company intranet, and the people in Finance have gone out for a birthday lunch so you can't ask them.

Dyad

- You have just learned that there will be cutbacks in your organization and your department's budget will be cut by 15 percent. You and a colleague meet to discuss this situation. Both of you fear an aggressive downsizing situation and secretly think you will be let go, whereas you can think of others who don't pull their weight around here.
- You meet with your boss about one of your employee's pattern of irregular behavior. Your boss is the one who hired this person and you feel caught in the middle between others who report to you (who resent their fellow employee for "getting by with" something) and your manager (who thinks he "walks on water").
- You meet with a colleague about a communication breakdown/misunderstanding between your departments. She stands up when you enter and doesn't offer you a seat. Her voice is clearly being heard by those who sit nearby.
- You meet with your employee for a below average performance review. He seems happy with his performance and doesn't see your point of view.



Group

- You are about to present a reorganization and restructuring initiative to the company at large. It will come as a shock to many and you anticipate strong resistance.
- You attend an executive retreat to examine future alliances needed to survive threatened competitor takeovers. No one agrees on which competitors are the threats and which could be strategic partners for your firm.
- Your project team meeting is loaded with hidden agendas. Nothing seems to happen in the meeting and no one is willing to take on additional responsibility for meeting deadlines.

