



## Best of 2024

### A Walk Down Memory Lane 2024

BEST OF INFLUENCER

#### ★ THE BEST OF HD's

**DESK: CEO Speaks**  
Navigating Leadership:  
ABC for Mental Health  
Challenges

- P2  2 mins

#### ★ THE BEST OF FUTURE FORWARD

Gender-Balanced  
Succession Planning

- P3  1.5 mins

#### ★ THE BEST OF QUICK BITES

What we still get wrong  
about Feedback

- P4  1 min

#### ★ THE BEST OF DEAR COACH

Communicating Change

- P5  1.5 mins

#### ★ THE BEST OF QUINTET

What Not to Do as a  
New Manager

- P6  1 min

#### ★ THE BEST OF FEATURED: Reflection

Socioeconomic  
Diversity at Work

- P7  1.5 mins

#### ★ THE BEST OF POINT OF VIEW:

Taking Ownership for  
Career and Professional  
Growth

- P8  1 min

#### ★ TEAM CHRONICLES:

Voices of Impact:  
Reflections from Our  
Dedicated Team

- P9  1.5 mins



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**LINA LAM**

CEO & Principal Consultant,  
Human Dynamic



# Navigating Leadership: ABC for Mental Health Challenges

- By Lina Lam

**A**s a leader, have you ever asked yourself before - **What can I do with all these changes happening around me that are out of my control? How can I help my team when I can't even help myself?**

**Why am I being blamed for complaining when I'm just being honest? I don't want to be promoted with much more burden put on me. I attended training and learned about mental health; but then what next?**

If these concerns resonate with you, know you're not alone. **Leadership presents unique challenges—high stakes, immense responsibility, and the expectation to appear strong and unflappable.**

The first crucial step in facing mental health challenges is to acknowledge and address these head-on.



Lina Lam

## Navigating Change and Uncertainty

▶ In today's fast-paced environment, leaders must often steer their organizations through change and uncertainty—whether due to mergers, restructuring, or external economic factors. The constant need to adapt can lead to decision fatigue, where the mental energy required to make decisions becomes overwhelming.



## The Burden of Responsibility

▶ Leaders are expected to make decisions that impact employees, stakeholders, and the company. The fear of failure or making the wrong choice can be paralyzing, leading to burnout. Continuous layoff announcements and other tough decisions can leave leaders feeling helpless and burdened by the responsibility of communicating difficult news.



## Isolation at the Top

▶ The saying "it's lonely at the top" rings true for many leaders. The fear of appearing weak or incompetent often prevents leaders from confiding in peers or subordinates, leading to loneliness and isolation. This lack of a support system, combined with the expectation to provide support,



can lead to a profound sense of disconnection.

## Perfectionism and Self-criticism

▶ Many leaders are high achievers with a strong drive for excellence. While this trait can lead to success, it also makes leaders vulnerable to perfectionism and self-criticism. The desire to always make the right decision and maintain an image of infallibility creates intense internal pressure. Mistakes or setbacks can lead to feelings of imposter syndrome, contributing to chronic stress and anxiety.



## Managing Others' Expectations

▶ Leaders are often caught between conflicting expectations from shareholders, employees, customers, and other stakeholders. Balancing these demands while staying true to one's vision can be mentally exhausting.



## Work-life Balance Challenges

▶ The demands of leadership often make it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Long hours, constant availability, and a never-ending flow of responsibilities make it challenging to disconnect and recharge.



## ABC FOR MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

No leader is immune to stressful moments, but how we manage our mindset and mental well-being plays a crucial role in overcoming challenges. To help leaders maintain their mental health while effectively guiding their organizations, here's a simple framework to practice daily.

**A AWARENESS:**  
▶ Be aware of your emotional responses to all these challenges. Take daily moments to reflect and to take journals on your reflection journey.

**B BALANCING:**  
▶ Develop inner peace and harmonious relationships with the external world. Balance what you can change about yourself with what you cannot and the expectations of yourself and others.

**C CARING:**  
▶ Care for yourself and others. Practice gratitude for yourself, with your teams, and in your work and life — it mitigates negative emotions and enhances mental, emotional, and physical well-being.



**Remember, no matter how many times you have heard and explored different mental health solutions, the real transformation comes from integrating these principles into your daily practice.**

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**KEERTANA SRINIVASAN**  
Regional Manager- India  
and South Asia



## Gender-Balanced Succession Planning

- By Keertana Srinivasan

**S**uccession Planning is a continuous process of growth and development for any organization's talent pool, and it is a key factor when it comes to effective talent management.

Over the years, the view of succession planning has shifted from identifying and grooming one key candidate to take over any particular leadership role. Now, the strategy involves identifying and defining the key competencies that are required to effectively run that position, and then developing your talent pool to fill that position. While we are seeing an increasing number of women employees in the corporate workforce, there is still a gap when it comes to having women take on senior leadership roles.

How can an organization bridge this gap to inculcate a more gender-balanced approach to succession planning?



1

➤ Understand what drives and hinders your female employees. Do the research and talk to your talent to identify their goals and aspirations, and what support they need from the company to achieve them.

2

➤ Understand how their needs can be met, and what systems need to be put in place to help them feel included and nurtured.

3

➤ Know your data – how many women enter your company and at what level, when do women leave your company, at what age and level of seniority, and their reasons for leaving. This will help you identify at which level more gender-inclusive interventions are required.



Let's look at some quick Do's when it comes to creating a culture of gender-balanced succession planning :

1

➤ Ensure that you include direct efforts to increase gender equality. For example, consider at least one woman as a possible candidate for every senior leadership position.

2

➤ When you promote a woman into a leadership position, provide her with the necessary support to achieve success in her new role. For example, allow space for women in leadership to also spend time with their families. Consider providing flexible work schedules, and judge performance based on results rather than Facetime.

3

➤ Use external assessments to identify potential successors. This will ensure a more neutral and bias-free selection process.

4

➤ Consciously identify emerging women leaders who stand out above their peers, and involve them in the company's leadership development plans.

5

➤ Provide your aspiring women leaders with the right mentors and support from their bosses and peers, to coach and groom them better to take on leadership roles.



It doesn't take long to develop a pipeline of next-generation women leaders, and it certainly isn't impossible. What's needed, however, is action from the top. Engaging in gender-balanced succession planning will contribute to improve your company's representation at the senior levels, while also ensuring the retention of your female talents.

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## ✕ What we still get wrong about Feedback

- By Grace Cho



Perhaps, like me, you've been browsing through books on feedback, underlining phrases like "I have some feedback for you. Do you have a moment?" and practising them under your breath. Maybe you've even committed to receiving other's feedback on your work by active listening and using questioning techniques to understand what it truly means when a leader says, "You need to develop your leadership!"

We're all caught in the deluge of feedback—upward feedback, downward feedback, peer feedback, 360-degree feedback, constructive feedback, and more. Amidst this flood of feedback, we often misuse the term itself without pausing to consider its true impact. Furthermore, due to numerous articles and surveys suggesting that the new generation craves feedback, organizations and leaders are desperately trying to establish and activate feedback systems.



### IT'S NOT FEEDBACK, IT'S ATTENTION:

✎ Facebook's experiment with six new emoticons beyond the "like" button aimed to provide users with more nuanced feedback. However, it was soon evident that users did not engage with the new emoticons as expected. In contrast, Snapchat continued to thrive without a "like" button or additional emoticons. On Snapchat, users feel less pressure to seek feedback and instead focus on maintaining connections and freely expressing themselves. The case of Snapchat reveals that what people truly desire on social media isn't feedback; it's attention. Especially among the new generation, the absence of feedback is appealing. This insight, challenges our flawed logic that they crave feedback in organizational settings.

### NEGATIVE FEEDBACK DOESN'T FOSTER LEARNING:

✎ Our brains continue growing throughout life, but growth rates vary across brain regions. Some regions have densely woven synaptic connections, while others are less dense. Growth is most pronounced where cells and synapses are abundant, with the strongest areas growing fastest. This supports the idea that our strengths align with developmental areas. Richard Boyatzis, a Psychology & Business Administration professor, conducted an experiment showing that students who received negative feedback triggered a vigorous response in their autonomic nervous system, activating the "fight-or-flight" system to focus on survival information. He concludes that strong negative emotions from criticism hinder access to neural circuits, causing cognitive, emotional, and perceptual impairments. Negative feedback doesn't aid learning; we learn best in our comfort zones where neural pathways are concentrated—our strengths.

### POSITIVE ATTENTION FOSTERS LEARNING AND GROWTH THE MOST.

✎ Positive attention fosters the most growth, while negative feedback limits growth. Thus, a key action is to consciously acknowledge each team member's strengths. Richard Boyatzis explains how our brains react differently to negative (like Velcro) versus positive (like Teflon) experiences, highlighting the need to nurture this habit. Constantly interrupting to correct mistakes can hinder productivity and growth, as negative criticism makes our brains resist improvement efforts.

### ADVICE ONLY BENEFITS THE PERSON GIVING IT.

✎ Sometimes we encounter team members who ask us to point out their mistakes. However, we must resist the strong temptation to offer the best advice in such situations. Our brain wiring is unique to each individual, shaping our perspectives, understanding, and behavioural patterns. Therefore, there is no guarantee that your advice will always be effective for team members.

### KEEP YOUR FOCUS ON 'WHAT', NOT 'WHY'

✎ When team members bring up issues, prompt them to discuss three things they excel at currently. This encourages them to consciously recognize their strengths, which can positively influence their brain's hormonal environment, fostering new ideas and behaviours. Then, ask about past successful strategies they've used in similar situations. Shift the conversation to future tasks and effective problem-solving approaches. Focus on practical solutions rather than dwelling on reasons. This method empowers team members to find their own solutions.

#### REFERENCES:

- ★ <https://hbr.org/2019/03/the-feedback-fallacy>
- ★ <https://hbr.org/podcast/2019/04/what-managers-get-wrong-about-feedback>
- ★ [https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-organizations-leaders-get-wrong-creating-healthy-tony-gambill?trk=pulse-article\\_more-articles\\_related-content-card](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-organizations-leaders-get-wrong-creating-healthy-tony-gambill?trk=pulse-article_more-articles_related-content-card)





## Communicating

## CHANGE

- By Ying Yin

### DEAR COACH,

My organization is undergoing strategic changes. How can I as a leader communicate change initiatives and decisions to my team members in an effective manner? What could be the possible challenges?

The issue you brought up has been an important point of discussion when it comes to adopting change. In recent years, most organisations have been through different levels of digital transformations and restructuring. While some understand the need for ongoing change inherently, it is important to effectively deliver

#### REFERENCE:

- ★ <https://hbr.org/2017/06/how-to-communicate-clearly-during-organizational-change>
- ★ <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/3/how-do-you-develop-implement-change-communication>

the message to the team members, including the change vision, reasons for change, and the desired outcomes. Effective communication is not only essential to support team members

to adapt to change but also to empower them to get behind the change.

Organisational change always comes with challenges. The common challenges include team members' resistance to change, lack of clarity while delivering messages, and the struggle to overcome scepticism as a result of communication failure in the past.



Here are some strategies to keep in mind while communicating change initiatives and decisions effectively to team members during organisational changes:



### 1 Timely information with transparency:

One of the most essential strategies that a leader can do to communicate change, is to be transparent about the information and deliver it on time. This avoids rumour and miscommunication while also making the team members feel included in the change process.



### 2 Multiple communication channels:

The organisation could have more than one channel to deliver change messages to communicate different aspects of change at different levels, timing, and frequency. This will optimise change communication and also the effectiveness.



### 3 Two-way communication:

A leader shouldn't focus only on the input of a message, but also prepare to receive feedback from team members to improve the



## DEAR COACH

communication. Actively listening, addressing queries, and acknowledging the feedback received from team members are important to foster a conducive environment for change implementation.

### 4 Ongoing leadership support:

There could be confusion, questions, issues, or conflicts around the change that has been communicated. Accessibility to leaders is necessary to manage concerns about the uncertainties. This allows them to ask questions and give their opinions, or even seek help if needed, throughout the change process.



Change will remain a constant, and even faster than ever after we enter into the next industrial revolution era with the emergence of AI. More organisations are implementing hybrid or remote work modes, which rely very much on effective communication to deliver tasks.

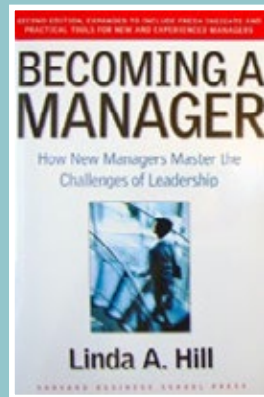


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**JOJO WANG**

Audit, Compliance, & Continuous Improvement  
Director, Human Dynamic



**A BOOK**

→ where Harvard Business School professor and leadership guru Linda Hill traces the experiences of nineteen new managers in their first year in the role-  
**Becoming a Manager How New Managers Master the Challenges of Leadership**  
– By Linda Hill

**A QUOTE OF IMMENSE SIGNIFICANCE TO NEW LEADERS**

→ “The art of leadership is saying no, not saying yes. It is very easy to say yes.”  
— Tony Blair



**FIVE THOUGHT-OUT  
PIECES OF ADVICE**

→ for first-time managers

<https://hbr.org/2022/06/5-pieces-of-advice-for-first-time-managers>



**A GREAT  
MOVIE**

→ that showcases the importance of vision, perseverance, and effective communication.  
**Lincoln (2012)**



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVWHyCMz5KM>

**A QUICK WATCH**

→ on 5 mistakes that new managers make by - **Leadership with Mike**



# What Not to Do as a New Manager

- By Jojo Wang

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**SUNNY ZHANG**

Managing Director & Consultant,  
Human Dynamic



In modern society, workplace diversity has become an issue that cannot be ignored. Among them, socio-economic diversity, as an important dimension of diversity, is attracting increasing attention. Socioeconomic Diversity refers to the diversity of people from different social and economic backgrounds in an organization or workplace. This diversity includes, but is not limited to, income level, education level, occupational background, social class, and family economic status. It aims to promote fairness, justice and creativity in the workplace by including employees of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

However, recognizing and embracing

this diversity is not easy and requires the efforts of individuals and organizations to eliminate bias and discrimination and build an inclusive and equal work environment.

To help individuals and organizations better understand socioeconomic diversity, we can adopt a reflective tool - the Diversity Awareness Inventory. The list is designed to lead individuals to self-reflection and examine whether they truly acknowledge socioeconomic diversity and take positive actions to promote it.

A diversity awareness checklist can include the following:

## Socioeconomic Diversity at Work

- By Sunny Zhang



### SELF-AWARENESS CHECK:

- Am I aware of my socioeconomic background and biases?
- Am I willing to listen to and learn about the perspectives and experiences of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds?

2

### REFLECTION ON MY BEHAVIOR:

- Do I demonstrate respect and tolerance for diversity in my daily work?
- Do I refrain from using prejudiced or discriminatory words and actions?

1

### A DIVERSITY AWARENESS CHECKLIST

3

### IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- What actions can I take to drive progress on socioeconomic diversity in my team or organization?
- Am I willing to participate in relevant training and education activities to enhance my diversity awareness and ability?

4

### OBSERVATION OF TEAM CLIMATE:

- Does my team encourage communication and collaboration among employees of different socioeconomic backgrounds?
- Is there any form of exclusion or segregation?



By completing this list, individuals can become more aware of their own attitudes and behaviors regarding socioeconomic diversity and thus make positive changes. In addition to individual reflection, organizations can promote socioeconomic diversity by reviewing recruitment strategies, training and development, establishing diversity committees, or establishing feedback mechanisms. These measures help create a more open, inclusive and innovative work environment that promotes employee growth and organizational success.

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DR. ERIC KUNG

Chairman & Principal Consultant,  
Human Dynamic



## Taking Ownership for Career and Professional Growth

- By Dr. Eric Kung



Many management and leadership writers have stressed the importance of ownership, accountability, and empowerment in motivating employees for performance and productivity. They have written more from the management and organizational perspective; they have not considered the perspective of the employees themselves. Why do they want to work? What is the meaning of work to them at different stages of their career or life development? What attitudes and competencies do they need to be effective at work? Last but not least, how could they have joy at work when there is so much pressure to give more time and effort to justify their value or existence?

William Bridges states that employees should see themselves as the CEO of “You & Co.” (Bridges, 1998). If the employees see themselves as just doing their jobs, working for someone or shareholders, the sense of

ownership, accountability, and empowerment ends up being an insignificant part of their job requirements. When they see themselves as running their own companies, ownership, accountability, and empowerment altogether carry different significance. I started my own company in 1993 when I was 33 years old. I knew very well that no one would care more about my company than me and, thus, I must take the initiative to develop myself and my company for professional, organizational, and



financial growth. It is a “to live or die” mission. I could carry four bags of mail to the post office to kickstart the marketing campaign for Human Dynamic on my first day as CEO. Even today, I could replace the four light bulbs in the training room after they had been left for repair for weeks. I could spend six years studying for my PhD degree in leadership and change to enrich my knowledge and drive our new business model as a leadership and change consultancy. True ownership makes a big difference!

Many people take on the “victim” mindset in their career particularly when things are not going well for different reasons. The owners of companies will try their best to prevent those things and to manage the contingencies in tough times and they blame no other people but themselves; they take full responsibility for their companies during challenging times. You should think the same about your career. You are the master of your career, and you need to plan, strategize, communicate, and execute your career plans. After a long hard working day, you can eat, drink, and enjoy the “fruits of your labour” for this is your reward.

“ YOU ARE THE MASTER OF YOUR CAREER, AND YOU NEED TO PLAN, STRATEGIZE, COMMUNICATE, AND EXECUTE YOUR CAREER PLANS. AFTER A LONG HARD WORKING DAY, YOU CAN EAT, DRINK, AND ENJOY THE “FRUITS OF YOUR LABOUR” FOR THIS IS YOUR REWARD ”

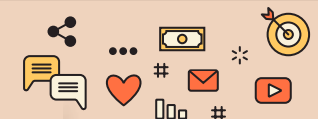
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MEET THE TEAM

# Voices of Impact: Reflections from Our Dedicated Team



## LINA LAM

Regional Coordinator, Korea and Japan

→ “My heartfelt thanks to our dynamic team from across regions for their incredible collaboration and diverse expertise in creating our monthly newsletter. Their efforts to gather diverse perspectives have transformed the newsletter into a rich resource, delivering meaningful insights and practical guidance that resonate with both our customers and internal teams. The depth and breadth of knowledge shared in each issue are invaluable, equipping our audience with tools to support growth and success. Thank you for the creativity, commitment, and passion the teams bring to each edition of Influencer. I’m excited to see what we have achieved together as

we continue to make our “Influencer” an indispensable source of inspiration for Leadership and Change.”

## XIN YUAN LOW

Editorial Team

→ “Being part of The Influencer has been an inspiring journey of growth and connection. The stories and insights on leadership and change continually motivate me, and I hope our work empowers readers to create meaningful impact within their own communities.”

## NHI LE

Regional Coordinator, Vietnam

→ “As the coordinator for The Influencer translations, I’ve gained invaluable experience by exploring a wide range of current and up-to-date resources. This role has offered me more than task completion—it has been a continuous learning journey, enriching both my professional and personal growth.”

## DANIEL YUEN

Online Publishing and Technical Support

→ “I’m grateful to be part of the team providing technical support for The Influencer publication, which shares insights, strategies, and experiences that inspire personal growth and drive professional development within communities and organizations.”

## CLARA JO

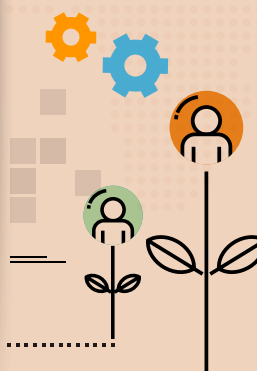
Regional Coordinator, Korea

→ “I believe being an influencer goes beyond creating content or sharing knowledge; it’s a transformative platform that connects people and inspires change through shared experiences that can positively impact lives.”

## MIA ZHO

Regional Coordinator, China

→ “Being part of The Influencer team has highlighted for me that every individual holds unique potential. When one person grows and thrives, their impact naturally uplifts the entire team and organization. Through The Influencer, our goal is to inspire this ripple effect—from empowering individuals to driving positive change across entire organizations.”



## MAHANYA RAMESH

Regional Coordinator, APAC

→ “I’ve been coordinating various editions of our newsletter, The Influencer, which provides leadership insights to our clients. This experience has not only refined my organizational skills but also deepened my understanding of key leadership topics, allowing me to stay current with trends and perspectives that matter to our clients.”

## TERMY

Regional Coordinator, Korea and Japan

→ “I hope that The Influencer inspires positive transformation for both individuals and organizations, supporting them on a path toward healthy and sustainable growth.”

## SONIA HILLARY

Regional Coordinator, APAC

→ “The most fascinating aspect of working on The Influencer is diving into research for each topic. It opens your mind to new perspectives and a world of possibilities!”

## RADHIKA DAHIYA

Editorial Team

→ “I am truly grateful to be part of The Influencer journey, where we aim to inspire growth and change. Through the insights and experiences shared, I hope we continue to empower both individuals and organizations to evolve, thrive, and achieve their full potential. Together, let’s drive positive transformation and contribute to healthier, more impactful growth in the year ahead.”

## GRACE CHO

Regional Coordinator, Korea and Japan

→ “As the year draws to a close, I’d like to take a moment to reflect on our journey together with The Influencer. Over the past months, our aim has been to inspire and provide valuable insights that resonate with you. True to our name, we hope each piece has brought a positive spark to your everyday life.

Looking ahead, we’re excited to continue sharing stories that plant seeds of change for the coming year. May you end this year warmly and welcome the new one with laughter and joy.

Thank you for being part of our community!”

