Questions from Chat Transcript from Jim Clifton “It’s the Manager” Program 4-23-2020

Seed question: In the current climate, has management in your organization had to flex? If so, how?

Answers from listeners:

- They had to change given the virtual communication, but what they are saying and what they value in their communication remain the same.
- The senior leadership team is meeting almost daily. And we’ve communicated through more frequent emails, town halls, and CEO videos.
- Yes, mostly by being more agile, more proactive and quicker in responding to events and implementing decisions.
- Yes - I think it is more disruptive for them I think than many team members to be remote. Same thing for us, Chris, daily meetings, iPhone videos from home. We have a new leadership team and it’s been amazing to see them pull together so quickly and speak with one voice - making decisions in real time.

Questions for Jim Clifton from listeners:

1. What manager’s behaviors are most effective on employee’s perceptions of their opinion being heard?
   - Source: It’s The Manager book
     - Globally, one in four employees strongly agree their opinions count at work. By doubling that ratio, organizations could realize a 22% reduction in turnover, a 33% reduction in safety incidents and a 10% increase in productivity.
     - Asking for and considering individuals’ input leads to more informed decisions-making and better results.
     - The most successful leaders and managers frequently and sincerely harness the asset of their employees’ knowledge to push through change, solve problems and innovate for growth.
     - The best managers promote open dialogue and encourage creativity and new ideas that can positively influence business results.
     - Provide open and honest feedback on employees’ opinions and ideas – advocating for good ones and addressing unfeasible ones.
     - Great managers create feedback loops so people feel like they are involved in the decision-making process, know what happens when
they offer an opinion or suggestion, and understand why a recommendation may not be possible.

- **Source:** [Manager Resource Guide – Q07 Opinions Count](INTERNAL)
  - Be open and receptive to feedback.
  - Think of ways to solicit feedback, opinions and ideas from your employees.
  - When employees ask to talk about something, immediately schedule time to listen.
  - Schedule regular times to talk with employees to specifically ask for their opinions.
  - Follow up regularly with employees about their ideas, even if action did not occur.
  - Provide open and honest feedback on employees’ opinions and ideas.
  - Treat your team like business partners by sharing information about the company that you would not typically think to share.
  - Advocate for your employees’ good ideas. Get others to consider their ideas and suggestions.
  - Create a safe environment for ideas. Make sure every employee is comfortable enough to tell it like it is.
  - Celebrate the implementation of employee-generated suggestions or ideas.
  - **Suggested engaging conversations:**
    1. What makes you feel valued here?
    2. How do you know your opinions matter?
    3. Who needs to hear your ideas?
    4. In the past six months, when have you felt your opinions mattered?
    5. Do you have any ideas or suggestions on how the team can improve quality?
2. What are your views on the best management approach to inspire innovation among employees?

- **Article:** How to Inspire Innovation and Learn from Mistakes
  - Most workers say their companies don’t encourage them to innovate
  - Command and control management can create cultures of silence
  - Managers must create opportunities where employee concerns can be heard
  - Workplace cultures need to encourage innovation
  - Manager communication matters:
    - Don’t punish workers for honest mistakes or ideas that don’t work out.
    - Company has a constructive, non-punitive method for fixing problems.
    - Workers are expected to try new ideas and occasionally fail as they respond to changing customer demands.
  - Managers are central to agile, innovative cultures, but leaders set the conditions that make agile work.
  - Leaders reward problem-fixing, not problem hiding.

- **Article:** HR Must Champion Innovation to Drive Agility
  - Use HR’s unique skills to coach mindsets and build agile teams
  - HR must incentivize courage
  - Doing, not training, creates an innovative culture
  - HR should establish communication channels that allow employees to share information
  - HR should replace training with doing – should include experiential learning and collaborative sharing
  - HR should be role models of fearlessness – encourage employees to bring up new ideas or make bold decisions.
  - Innovation is a trial-and-error process
  - HR should actively coach teams to adapt an innovative mindset.
  - Employees need the right environment to incubate the ideas, as well as the right coaching, support, and training to help translate an idea into real-world application and impact.
3. Are there benefits to keeping 360 performance feedback strictly between manager, project manager, and employee? If so, how much weight should project managers' feedback hold?

The 360 review should generally include all direct reports, 4-10 peer raters, and at least one manager rater (though other managers can be identified to rate as well). The 360 should be combined with coaching and other development and after a period where the individual has a chance to optimize their workstyle, the next 360 can be conducted to track progress. When done well, multi-rater 360 feedback can equip leaders with valuable information that can help them improve personal and organizational performance.

Gallup’s constituency 360 feedback is:

- Designed to maximize leadership strengths
- Focused on future behavior
- In-depth view of work
- Insight and coaching around behaviors that a leader can control
- Strategic investment in growth

These articles have additional information on Gallup’s competencies:

- [Rethinking Competencies, Part 1: 7 Expectations of Leaders](#), Adam Hickman, Ph.D., and Nate Dvorak (2019)
- [Rethinking Competencies, Part 2: What's After Feedback?](#), Nate Dvorak (2019)
- [Rethinking Competencies, Part 3: Is Your Program Broken?](#), Andrew Robertson and Nate Dvorak (2019)
4. The mindset of being a ‘Leader’ instead of a ‘Manager’ has been written about regularly. How much do you think this difference has an effect?

Rather than distinguishing between leader and manager, Gallup differentiates between boss and coach.

- Article: **Give Up Bossing, Take Up Coaching: You’ll Like the Results**
  - Coaches focus on individual and team engagement, seeing their role as the provider of what employees need to succeed.
  - Coaches understand, leverage and get great satisfaction from deploying the unique talents and strengths of each employee.
  - Coaches set clear expectations and performance goals, offering feedback that optimizes individual strengths and increases team effectiveness.
  - The best managers know great performance comes from frequent, meaningful conversations with their workers. They know what to talk about because they know their employees well.

5. What do you rank highest for a manager to focus on: communicating role clarity or being vulnerable to establish open, honest feedback?

- Article: **Drive Performance With Authentic Manager-Employee Relationships**
  - Having the right conversations directly affects performance
  - Gallup has discovered five critical conversations that drive performance
    - Role and relationship orientation – this conversation begins to build trust by authentically connecting with each person to understand their talents, expectations, needs and motivations
    - Quick Connect – this conversation encourages building a trusting relationship between an employee and a manager and identify any barriers getting in the way of success.
    - Check-In – this conversation enables the manager to discuss successes, realign and reprioritize expectations as needed, and provide timely feedback.
    - Developmental Coaching – this conversation identifies opportunities for employees to learn and develop that aligns with their role and developmental needs.
    - Profess Review – this conversation help celebrate successes, prepare for future achievements and plan for development and growth opportunities.
These five conversations allow for the manager to authentically connect with each member of the team so they can gain individualized understanding of each person – a key and necessary driver of honest, direct communication and engagement that translates to performance. When trust has been built through conversations and relationships, even challenging conversations can become less challenging. If conversations are happening the right way, an employee is never caught off guard during performance-related questions. When managers coach their employees through ongoing, strengths-based conversations, they build trust by meeting the individual needs of each person. In doing so, they can honestly acknowledge what isn’t working so that role expectations can be defined, clarified or adjusted accordingly.

6. Do you see today’s "pause" resulting in a more decentralized management style, moving forward? Also, what is the impact of this pause on employer; employee trust?

- It is still hard to say exactly what the workplace will look like as restrictions are lifted and people begin returning to their workplaces. In fact, some populations of workers may continue to work remotely if their roles allow.
- If anything, the role of the manager will not pause, but become even more important as managers work to develop and engage their workers across different locations when they may have been used to being in the same location.
- However, especially in global companies, we know that people regularly manage individuals across teams and in different geographic areas based on different project.
- [Article: 5 Facts About engagement and Remote Workers]
- [Article: 3 Ways to Continue Employee Development Through COVID-19]
- [Article: The Future of Work Means Managing Through Disruption]

- It is still hard to say exactly what the workplace will look like as restrictions are lifted and people begin returning to their workplaces. In fact, some populations of workers may continue to work remotely if their roles allow.
- During uncertain times, companies must embrace a culture of change.
- If employees are accustomed to a culture of change, they are less likely to feel threatened or overwhelmed when new initiatives require them to adapt.
- Changes in how companies are organized have made aligning employees with a common vision for the future even more important – but also more challenging. When disruptive change occurs, managers must work closely
with company leaders to establish a common understanding of how changes relate to the company’s overall purpose.

- Employees are less likely to view change as threatening if they already work in a culture of high development. Employees are accustomed to having regular conversations with managers about their professional development.
- If managers are already serving as career coaches to their employees, they don’t need to start from scratch to meet their team members’ needs for upskilling or reskilling during major changes.
- Managers’ coaching makes a powerful difference. More than three-fourths of employees who agree their manager gives them continuous feedback to improve their performance also say their company supports them in developing necessary skills.

7. Jim, you talked about the impact of the manager on engagement and retention. How does culture compound or compliment that?

- Gallup’s Perspective Paper on Culture
  - Culture attracts world-class talent to your organization. People want to work for an organization that lives out its mission every day. Growing and maintaining a consistent culture across all business units is essential for winning over elite workers.
  - Employee engagement is not the same as culture, but they heavily influence each other. Engagement centers on meeting essential employee needs. It helps leaders and managers focus on the actions that matter most to their team members and aims to create employees and teams that are poised for high performance. Achieving high employee engagement is an important method for driving a high-performing culture and accomplishing the goals of the organization. Culture is a pervasive force that influences the way people work together, how decisions get made, and can be a major influence on whether an employee is attracted or not attracted to a company.
  - Engaged employees are the fuel for an organization, but the culture – driven by purpose and brand – set the direction.
  - Gallup research shows a direct link between employee’s understanding of their organization’s purpose and culture, and measures of business health. Among US employees, four in 10 strongly agree with the statement, “The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job
is important.". By moving that ratio to eight in ten employees, organizations could realize a 41% reduction in absenteeism, a 50% drop in patient safety incidents and a 33% improvement in quality.

- Culture can improve the following key performance goals of an organization:
  - Strengths
  - Diversity and inclusion
  - Safety
  - Innovation
  - Compliance
  - High performance

8. Please recap the 4 competencies a manager should focus on now. [Trust, Stability, Compassion, Hope]

- Article: Remember the Needs of Followers During COVID-19
  - Trust:
    - Honesty, integrity and respect come to mind as people speak about leaders building trust.
    - High performing teams rarely discuss trust as they live it each day in their actions.
    - Leaders build trust most through their actions and through an orientation toward doing what is right while doing so with heart.
    - Leaders can also build trust through their willingness to be candid about difficult news or even about their own flaws.
  - Stability:
    - Provide practical and psychological stability to employees. Make sure they have what they need to do their job.
    - Provide psychological stability about where the company is headed. Clearly define and communicate your decision-making principles. Help provide some normalcy in a difficult time.
  - Compassion:
    - Now is the time to show your employees how you care. Make sure that it is verbalized and communicated. However, make sure that the company culture and policies reinforce what is being shared. The work environment needs to reflect the compassion being shown to employees during difficult times.
Hope:

- There is an aspirational quality to hope that inspires commitment as well as motivational aspect that prompts performance. Hope sits on the foundation of trust and stability and pulls people forward and invites them to participate in creating a future that is better than the present. View hope as precious capital. Hopeful workers are more resilient, innovative and agile, better able to plan ahead and navigate obstacles.

- Article: Leading Your Workplace With Hope Through COVID-19
  - Generating hope in the workplace can keep employees engaged
  - Hope is more than sentimentality; it ties to work and life outcomes
  - Leaders and managers can increase hope through new goals, energy and ideas

9. With HR budgets being reduced and a big shift to virtual work, what are some practical ways to develop managers, given that they are so important.

- Manager Development
  - Influence outcomes by aligning team and organizational goals, drive performance, inspire others, lead change
  - Engage team by establishing expectations, continually coach, create accountability for self and others, build relationships, and develop people.
  - Develop identity as a manager by leveraging strengths and managing weaknesses, increase self-awareness, build personal brand, think critically to make better decisions and communicate clearly.

- Article: Leading Remotely: What Managers Need to Keep Teams Engaged
  - Listen – ask managers what they need and listen to their answers. Each manager will have their own perspective of the situation. Depending on their approach, they may need different types of development. Tailor your approach based on their specific needs.
  - Communicate Frequently – strong leaders inspire everyone. Ask managers to find out what people need to hear from the local managers and what they want to hear from leaders. Focus on areas of accountability and quality and encourage efforts to keep everyone connected.
  - Provide virtual learning forums
Develop ongoing mentoring opportunities depending on specific manager needs
Facilitate peer-to-peer sharing of best practices

10. What are some of the leadership communication skills that are most needed during the shift to virtual work, and what are 3 of the biggest challenges that leaders now face in communicating with empathy?

- Article: Crisis Communication: How Great Leaders Stop Rumors Before They Start
  - Ineffective communication leaves room for rumors to increase uncertainty
  - Leaders can stop misinformation from damaging engagement and culture
  - Communication should be transparent, realistic and relationship building
  - A mere 13% of employees strongly agree the leadership of their organization communicates effectively with the rest of the organization.
  - Add rumor busting to your meeting agendas – despite issues that might arise.
  - Be wary of sharing “inspirational” messages that lack substance. Make sure that day-to-day experiences don’t make them question a leader’s authenticity.
  - Empower managers with the authority to crush rumors. Allow employees with questions to reach directly out to their manager for clarification. If employees view their manager as “in the know” they will go directly to their manager instead of the rumor mill.
  - The best leaders and managers build relationships that inspire confidence; they ask for and receive tough questions, and work through the difficult times side by side with team members.
  - Leaders need to take charge of communication. There needs to be regular and proactive communication. Take charge of transparent communication so that fake news and rumors do not undermine the work you are doing to drive the performance and engagement of your team.

- Article: 3 Strategies for Leading Effectively Amid COVID-19
  - Employees need trust and compassion
  - Employees need stability, prioritize Wellbeing amid disruption
  - Employees need hope – an anchor to their true north
3 Biggest Challenges Leaders face to communicate with empathy:

- Article: [Remember the Needs of Followers During COVID-19](#)
  - Build Trust. Leaders need to be predictable in an unpredictable time. Leaders need to speak with honesty to build trust. – being realistic in this way can help teams know that you care and trust them too, as you do your best to lead them to the brightest future possible, despite inevitable challenges and change.
  - Have compassion by speaking it to your employees and backing it up with policy. If there ever was a time to show care, this is it. People are juggling new responsibilities, fears and problems. They need to hear their managers and leaders say out loud that they understand. Company policies need to support what leaders are saying regarding remote working, flextime, etc.
  - Provide psychological stability, specifically when sharing where the company is headed and whether jobs are secure. Leaders must clearly define and communicate decision-making principles, especially regarding employment and pay. Regularly communicate your progress and accomplishments during this time so that it doesn’t feel like the world has completely stopped.

- It’s the Manager Section on Leading with Empathy

LEADING WITH EMPATHY

When others are faced with a worrisome situation, help them articulate and come to terms with their complex emotions. Respect their feelings, and allow them the freedom to express what they need to express, whether or not your feelings mirror theirs. Acknowledge and deal with these emotions honestly to build trust.

Because trust is paramount to you, many of your associates are likely to feel comfortable approaching you to share their thoughts, feelings, concerns and needs. Encourage them. They will greatly value your discretion and desire to be genuinely helpful.

Witnessing others’ happiness brings you pleasure. Consequently, you are likely to notice opportunities to highlight people’s successes and positively reinforce their achievements. At each opportunity, deliver a kind word of appreciation or recognition. By doing so, you are likely to make a profound and engaging impression on them.
Sometimes you have the ability to understand what others are feeling before they've recognized it themselves. This uncanny awareness can be unnerving or comforting, depending on how you share it. Ask questions to gently guide people toward recognizing what you already suspect. Help them name their feelings and create their own path to self-discovery.

Sensitive to the feelings of others, you readily gauge the emotional tone of a room. Use your talents to forge a bridge of understanding and mutual support. Your Empathy talents are especially important during trying times because they demonstrate your concern as a leader, thereby creating security and loyalty.

Patience and understanding are your hallmarks. Take time to hear people out; don’t rush to judgment. Giving people time and space to sort out their own thoughts and feelings in a safe environment promotes their sense of stability and tranquility.

Others are likely to choose you as a confidante or mentor. Affirm that this is a satisfying relationship for you so they feel welcome to approach you. Encourage them by putting words to what you sense about their aspirations; inspire and guide their dreams by imagining with them.

Your Empathy talents allow you to anticipate events and reactions. Because you are observant of how others are feeling, you are likely to sense what is about to happen in the organization before it becomes common knowledge. Help people be alert as positive emotions build, so as a group, you can capitalize on this anticipation to create hope.

11. What’s your view of the role that executive coaches play in developing leaders, and offering more direct feedback?

While some executive coaches may act as counselors or consultants, a true executive coach empowers leaders to meet their most pressing challenges. Executive coaches should be both sounding boards and strategic partners. The best can help executives leverage their strengths and mentor them when thinking through data-driven advice needed to meet performance targets. Provide strengths-based coaching, executive coaches can provide direct feedback to executives and help them determine how to leverage their own strengths to navigate difficult situations.
12. With flatter organizations, there are fewer managers. How can someone who does not have direct reports develop effective management skills?

- Manager Development Framework
  - Align work to organizational goals
  - Drive performance
  - Inspire others
  - Lead change
  - Share clear expectations
  - Coach and mentor those around you
  - Create accountability for yourself and others you work with
  - Build relationships and develop peers when possible
  - Leverage strengths
  - Build personal brand
  - Communicate clearly
  - Think critically to make better decisions