

INSPIRE

On Leadership

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Responsibility Requires Confidence

100% of the organizations I talk with share something in common. A key reason for seeking development of its leaders is they won't address issues.

This is almost universal. Several years ago, I talked with a company president who had a serious issue unfolding in his operation while I was on site. I went to him and said, "I think this is something you need to address personally." His reply, without so much as a hesitation was "I'm not going out there."

If our executives are afraid to have a conversation, it certainly is unreasonable to think front line leaders and middle leaders are equipped with the skill.

Most issues that require involvement from a leader will relate to performance, behavior or attendance. Yet, the most common response of a leader who is faced with an issue to address is avoidance. The second response is to address it poorly, in a way that shows disregard for the employee.

Leaders lack confidence. We hear things like:

- > I don't know what to say.
- > I don't want to offend them.

- > I don't want to hurt their feelings.
- > I don't want to deal with their anger.
- > I don't like conflict.
- > I don't want to hurt our relationship.

The underlying message is I do not have the confidence to have the conversation. I do not believe I can have the conversation in a candid, respectful manner.

For many, confidence is misunderstood. To be confident doesn't mean you know how to do it; to be confident means you trust in your ability to figure it out. Sometimes figuring it out requires reaching out to someone for help, participating in learning and development of some kind, or even sitting down with a blank sheet of paper.

Where does responsibility factor in? Leaders are responsible for having these conversations. A leader can change the trajectory of an employee's future, as well as their present performance and fulfillment at work. This includes the work they do, combined with their sense of satisfaction in their relationships.

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