



the coaching room

A Partner for Life

15 Leadership Tips to Engaging Your Followers





Hey, Jay here from The Coaching Room, thanks for checking out my latest 15 tips article on engaging your followers as a leader. This article is about the process of engagement – of engaging followers through leading, connecting, relating and sharing meaning.

Please read through these tips with an open mind, particularly as some of the tip titles that may seem antagonistic at first, that is part of the design and growth opportunity; you can always close your mind at the end.

What is Leadership (in my view)?

Leadership, unlike management, is about your way of being, and not about what you do (or do not do). Leadership is an authentic expression of your way of being – from the inside out. Paradoxically though it isn't about you – it's about your followers!

As you express on the outside, your vision and meaning on the inside, it awakens people to their own expression of their potential – in service of what is possible. It is my experience that people become engaged in that possibility. They become engaged, inspired, awakened to their own possibilities, in actualising yours.

So leadership is about creating and connecting people through meaning. The richer the meaning, the better the performance. Don't believe me – try this simple thought experiment to test that for yourself.

Choose something simple that you love to do (cooking, golf, eating a wonderful meal with family, walking the dog, reading, walking etc.) and ask yourself – “what is the positive intention for me in doing this?” Whatever your answer, now ask yourself “what does that (your first answer) give you?” Then once more – whatever your second answer, ask yourself, “what's even more important to you than that?”

As you look at this final answer, notice how meaningful it is to you. Notice that this is why you engage in that initial activity. And as you notice this, do you get a sense of how powerful meaning is to your performance in this activity?



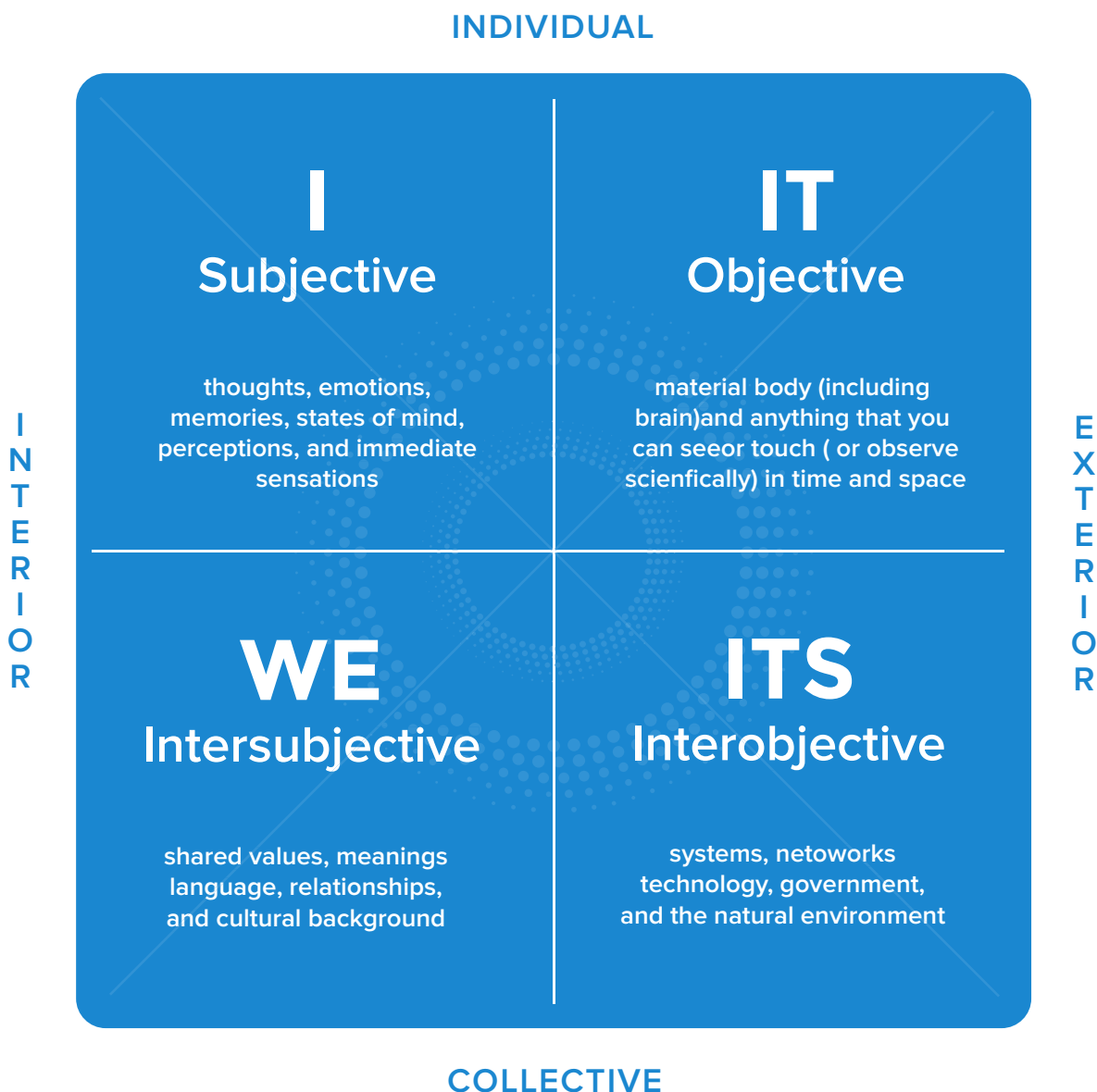
The Quadrants Introduced (a leadership development model)

Back in 1994, after 3-years as a hermit, philosopher Ken Wilber, (founder of Integral Theory and Integral Institute), found the 4 Quadrants – the 4 integral perspectives of reality.

The quadrants model is a deep and rich developmental model for accelerating growth. It is a source of incredible leadership wisdom.

It is for this reason that I am introducing the model into this article.

Firstly, let's take a look at the model.





1st Position (first person perspective) – Self (I)

The position of seeing, hearing, and feeling from out of oneself. We take this position to speak authentically, to present ourselves, our thoughts, feelings, and responses congruently, to disclose, listen, inquire, and be present with another. This position is known as “looking”.

2nd Position (2nd person perspective) – Other (we)

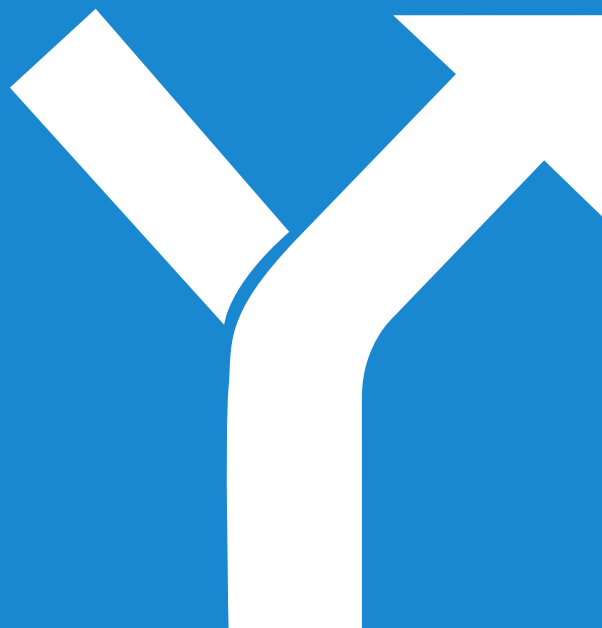
The empathy position of understanding, feeling with, and seeing things from another’s point of view. Here we feel in accord with the other and develop a strong sense of others - his or her perceptive. This position is known as “looking as – another – inter-subjectively”.

3rd Position (third person perspective) Meta (it)

The position of stepping back to gain a sense of distance, to observe, to witness, to be neutral, and appreciate other perspectives (see what they cannot see). This position is known as “looking at – another - objectively”.

4th Position (fourth person perspective) Meta System (its)

The position for understanding the wider context(s) (ie. Environmental, social, linguistic, business, family, organisational and other systemic contexts) that influence all of the larger systems and contexts of our world. This position is known as “looking systemically – inter-objectively”.





To summarise the benefits of the quadrants in Leadership and engagement are:

To hold multiple perspectives at once, in any and all moments, enables you freedom from:

The limits of any single perspective

Any double binds (damned if I do, damned if I don't)

A polarity of mind (being had by or caught in disagreement)

Any argument with another (the need to hold a single perspective)

Any culture (being able to reframe norms, beliefs and rules)

Any systemic struggle (where you no longer functionally fit within a system).

To hold multiple perspectives at once, in any and all moments, enables you the power to:

Run your own brain and help others run theirs

Take responsibility for your thinking, feeling speaking and behaving

Respond to people, events, the environment with congruence

Take massive action in a considered, holistic and ecological way

Access unlimited intrinsic (rather than extrinsic) motivation and apply it to anything that you like (goals, challenges, struggles, etc.)

Become a model of change for others to follow (influence others through modelling)

For more on the power of the 4-perspectives, read my article:

[**The Ultimate Guide to Developing Wisdom**](#)

Following then, using the quadrants as a developmental model, are my 15 tips for engaging your followers.



1. Create a compelling vision!

Do you have a vision? Is it compelling to you AND your followers? Is it well formed?

A compelling vision the ability to think about or plan the future with meaning, imagination and wisdom.

A compelling vision must be able to engage people across all 4 quadrants (perspectives), and include individual and collective meaning, as well as individual and collective actions, behaviours and systems.

2. How to Create (or re-create) your Vision using the 4 Quadrants

Looking at/looking as - using the quadrants

The quadrants enable us to look at and as our staff, our clients, stakeholders and even ourselves.

Looking at – the 3rd person or objective perspective

When we use the quadrants to “look at” our staff, clients, our stakeholders, and ourselves we become objective (fly on the wall) to our/their personal and professional needs, desires skills, capacities etc. We can also see what “they” do not see. What they are missing, that needs to change or evolve in order for them to engage with your vision.

We can then use this information to expand and grow our leadership vision, and enable these people to connect with and “personalise” your vision.

Looking as – the 2nd person or Intersubjective perspective

When we use the quadrants to look as others (staff, our clients, and stakeholders etc.), we can then identify which of their needs need to be included for them to engage with your vision (personally and culturally). We can begin to understand what the component parts “mean” to each person and team.

When creating a vision, it must include all 4 perspectives – or it will miss part of the equation and therefore miss the mark.



3. Meaning Drives Performance (period)

In his seminal work, “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience”, Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi outlines his theory that people are happiest (most engaged and present when they are in a state of flow— a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. It is a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter.

The state of flow, Mihaly argues is the balance of Skills and Challenge.

In 2012, in his book “Neuro Semantics” Michael Hall explains that Mihaly is pointing to the core concepts of “meaning” (challenge) and “performance” (skills).

That is, when you connect with (create) personal meanings and attach them to your performance (as in the above thought experiment), you become intrinsically motivated to actualise that meaning into an embodied performance.

Another way of saying that is that high quality, congruent meanings create intrinsic motivation to perform at highly effective level.

So what meanings are you and your people bringing to your/their work and workplace? If they are anything other than optimal, there is work to be done here – firstly with yourself, then in an embodied way with others.

4. Become objective to (and know) your culture

If you are not objective to your culture, you are subject to it – that is – it has you, it governs you and leads YOU.

If you want to know what the current way culture is, you must first separate yourself from it, and become objective to it.

This enables you to move from subjectivity (the dance floor) to objectivity (the balcony).

The interesting thing about culture is that you can’t go at it directly. You can only change it indirectly...



5. Lead and engage the culture through meaning (1st person perspective)

Have you noticed that your body is always present in the now? It is one of the most enlightened parts of us! The body is like a fine tuning fork, it communicates with us and other people constantly. It does this in a number of ways. On the emotional level our body communicates to us that we have left the present moment or that we are miles away from reality in another world we've created. Our body communicates to us on the physical level to, if we put too much or the wrong type of food into it, it gets inflamed, both inside and outside.

Behaviorally, our body will communicate to ourselves and other people some truth, even when we are saying the opposite. Have you ever noticed when you or someone else is saying yes, yet the head is shaking No? How about when you or someone else say they will or will not do something and then they do the exact opposite only moments later? So, today's tip, listen to your body, notice it, notice how other people's body communicates at a much higher level than the spoken word. You have a lot of truth to hear and share through aligning what you say with what you do and what you do with what you say.

6. Lead and engage the culture through embodied action (3rd person perspective)

This is also known as lead by example. This points to self-integrity (do as you say) and more importantly the line of "intra-personal intelligence" (relationship with self).

Scientists from the field of neuroscience discovered Mirror Neurons in the early 90s.

A mirror neuron is a neuron that fires both when an animal/human acts and when the animal/human observes the same action performed by another. Thus, the neuron "mirrors" the behaviour of the other, as though the observer were itself acting.

Your people are always consciously and unconsciously modelling your actions and behaviours. Don't believe us – try a quick experiment and experience mirror neurons in action. The next time you are in a group of people and it's not critical, have a good "yawn" and see what follows :)

What culture are you leading (intentionally or unintentionally) through your actions and behaviours?



7. Lead and engage the culture through social and functional systems (4th person perspective)

Systems shape us as we shape them. Social and environmental systems can be seen, monitored, and manipulated. But first they must be known.

We know that our environment has a direct impact upon us as a human being. It impacts us physiologically and psychologically.

In my experience, the physical impacts of their people's environment are known by most leaders, (light, time of day, workplace orientation, proximity, location, number of people, organisational structure, etc.).

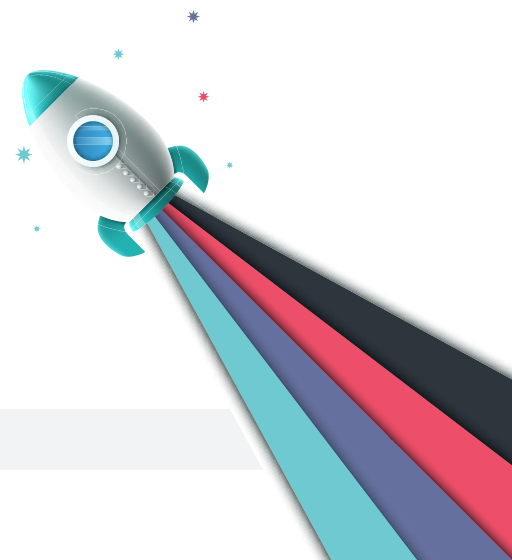
Psychological impacts are less known by leaders in my experience. For example; many organisation that we work with operate within hierarchical frames, but champion collaboration, creating polarities within individuals and groups.

Let's say that this were true for you; what are the frames set by such a social system?

It says for example - You work for me, I work for her, she works for him – all the way up! But you working for me isn't collaborative. We can collaborate (for example on a project), but the moment that stops, we go back to hierarchical.

Let's say that were true and the CEO then said – one of our key values is collaboration. Then you have a problem, because the social system doesn't support the intent.

These unspoken frames held by leaders absolutely shape the culture and guide the values held by the people within.





8. Influence is in here (within) not out there (without)

Your power, and your ability to engage others, exists only within you (taking ownership of your 1st person perspective). This is (only) where influence occurs. At The Coaching Room, we refer to this as your “power zone”.

What are your innate powers? They are your powers of mind, emotion, communication and behaviour.

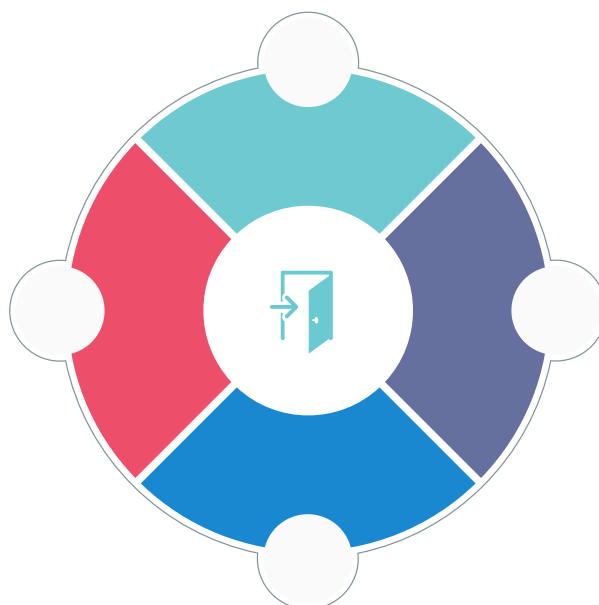
They are your mental powers for thinking, believing, framing, evaluating, imagining, remembering, and much, much more.

They are your emotional powers to “move” yourself “out” (ex-motion) from your current state to a desired state, to feel and develop your emotional intelligence (EQ) and live through the expression of love, joy, peace and passion.

They are your linguistic powers of speech, which enables you to inquire to communicate and understand ideas and thoughts; to explore to learn, invite in and set boundaries to keep out, to tell stories, make music, write books, etc.

They are your behavioural powers to gesture, take action, plan, create, practice, persist, bounce back (be resilient), etc.

Influence can only happen when you take ownership for your 4 powers.





9. Responsibility for, and ownership of, your 4 powers leads you back to the present moment, where your leadership and engagement potential exists!

Potential is a present oriented phenomena. Most people I coach presuppose that their potential is somewhere out there – in the future. Well if you believe that, I have some bad news. The future doesn't exist (except in mind). "Future" is exclusively a construct of the human mind. There I said it, the cat is out of the bag.

Your potential only exists now, in this moment, in whatever it is you are doing, NOW.

Taking responsibility means taking ownership of your 4 powers; "My thinking, my feelings, my actions, my communicating".

By owning your responses, you can begin to feel your innate powers intimately. You can own your responses (rather than reacting to reality). This is where influence and engagement is created. Influence is a product of ownership of your 4 powers. Engagement is the capacity to influence through connecting, relating and communicating with effect.





10. Understand and live the Responsibility to/for distinction.

In Leadership development, we hold the responsibility to/for distinction top of mind. The distinction speaks to the difference between responsibility for something (out there) and responsibility to something (out there).

The key difference in the distinction is what you CAN be responsible for (your 4-powers). Everything else is what you and I are responsible TO (events, situations, people, outcomes, results etc.).

You and I cannot be responsible FOR anything outside your/our 4-powers!

12. Leadership versus management – understanding and approaching leadership and engagement quadratically.

We have discussed at length that influence is about taking ownership of your 4 powers (in the upper left and upper right quadrants).

Leadership (a nominalization of the verb “to lead”) must encompass all 4 quadrants.

Management (which is task oriented) focuses only on the right hand quadrants – what you say and do, what you can see and measure, what you can create and maintain in terms of the systems, processes and environmental changes.

Leadership also encompasses these right hand quadrants, however, the leader isn't the person doing all that doing. A leader engages others to do the work that needs to be done (for more on this see tip #11 – give up your old day job).

Engagement is about leading individual and collective states, and leading individual and collective meaning (through intention, purpose, vision and culture). This then becomes the engine that drives individual and collective performance.

By leading and influencing through sharing meaning, a leader does less and influences more through quality relating.

Which brings us to the next point.



11. Give up your old day job!

A provocative statement, and from my perspective, necessarily so.

In my experience in working with and coaching thousands of leaders; Leaders are doing way too much!

In fact, I'll go further than that and say, in my experience, most leaders in today's businesses are yesterday's managers – and it is the habit of management that has a stranglehold on their current approach to leadership.

The answer? Give up your old day job.

To engage your followers, you need to become a thought leader, a visionary.

You need to be more and do less. That means letting go of what you know, of having the answers, of being an expert. If that sounds difficult for you to do, you probably aren't leading.

13. Do less, not more

This follows on from the previous tip. As well as giving up your old day job, leaders need to be able to prioritise.

This is also known as time management, but is actually priority management, which really boils down to having access to a nice strong "NO".

To say yes is to focusing on one thing, is say no to everything else. We intrinsically know this when we say yes to getting married :)

To engage is to lead, to lead is to hold a vision (an intention, a purpose, a mission), to hold a vision, a leader needs to be able to say NO to everything that sits outside that vision, to ensure that the team and the organisation remains focused.

To say no to everything else, is to say yes to the vision.

How strong is your no? How effective is your priority management?



14. Leadership is followership, followership is leadership.

Most of the organisations we coach and consult to have a bottom up approach to Leadership and engagement.

It's the wrong way round. It needs to be top down.

The CEO's actual role is to serve her Executive Leadership Team. Their role is to serve their Management Team, whose actual role is to serve the employees, who connect, relate with and serve their clients.

Paradoxically, most organisations say that they are client centric, but their structure is the other way around – in service of the shareholder.

The shareholder benefits when the clients are happy and purchasing :)

Leadership is followership – in service (period).

15. Share your vision

So you now have a compelling, quadratic vision. You understand that meaning drives performance and your job is to do less and communicate more. You understand that Leadership is followership.

Now like a crazy person, repeating himself or herself again and again, go share and communicate, and frame every conversation with your big hairy audacious vision.





Conclusion: Your actual success is your potential failing as a leader.

This tends not to land so well for people we coach, at first...

What this means is – the success that got you here, won't get you there. Difference in the role between Managing and leading, is the difference in approach.

Engagement is all about approach.

Your successful (past) approach, your accumulated industry knowledge, your expertise, what got you here is getting in the way of your ability to empower, engage and follow and lead others.

Well, that's it from me, I hope that this article has been challenging in a good way, and maybe even given you some clarity in what engagement is, in my view, all about.

Make an Impact



the coaching room
A Partner for Life

HQ

Level 29 Chifley Tower, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney, NSW
2000

CALL 1300 858 089

Other Offices

Level 6 Reserve Bank Building, 111 Macquarie Street,
Hobart, 7000, Australia

Level 27, 101 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia

Level 36, Riparian Plaza, 71 Eagle Street, Brisbane, QLD
4000 Australia