



A CLEAR LEADERSHIP STUDY

Impact of Clear Leadership at BCCSS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted at BC Clinical Support Services (BCCSS) with the objective of determining the impact of taking an organizationally-provided Clear Leadership course. It was administered by Mariel Conti, a Beedie School of Business student, and supervised by the author of the program, Dr. Gervase Bushe. The Clear Leadership program provides techniques for understanding one's own experience and other people's experiences resulting in interpersonal clarity. In particular, this study focuses on the program's effect on self-awareness, the descriptive self, the curious self, self-differentiation and partnership.

As defined by the Clear Leadership book, self-awareness occurs when one understands their own thoughts, feelings, observations and wants on a moment to moment basis. On the other hand, a person is successful at being descriptive if he or she can be transparent to others. When a person is curious, she is able to uncover other people's experience by observing, questioning and probing. A differentiated individual is one who is able to be connected while simultaneously being separated to others. And finally, partnership happens when two or more people have a common purpose with which they individually feel responsible for its success.

Information for this study was gathered by interviewing a randomly stratified sample. A manager from BCCSS contacted employees by email to request for their voluntary participation, of which 13 participated; 7 were interviewed in person, while 6 were over the phone. Interviews were chosen as a data collection method since it allowed for an open-ended exploration of participants' experiences. It consisted of semi-structured, non leading questions that were asked one at a time to ensure clarity and accuracy of responses.

100% of participants responded that Clear Leadership had a positive impact on their self-awareness; however, 62% stated that it was more difficult to apply concepts learned in a home environment. 77% stated that they notice themselves making more of an effort to be transparent to others. The other 23% were unaware if Clear Leadership improved their transparency. In terms of the curious self, 92% of participants notice their own sense-making more since taking the course. They are also likely to inquire others about their personal experience. When it comes to self-differentiation, 62% responded that the course made them more aware of being separated and connected to people at the same time; 8% agreed only slightly, 15% disagreed, and the other 15% claimed that they don't know. In terms of partnership, 92% claimed that the course increased their success in collaboration at work. In addition, 54% were having regular learning conversations to enhance clarity. Overall, 100% of participants said that Clear Leadership improved the culture of BCCSS. To further increase its effectiveness, 77% of respondents recommended that a reinforcement program be established to retain concepts learned.

Lastly, caution should be taken in assuming that the results reflect the whole organization. Some limitations include the open-ended nature of question which resulted to some inconsistency of responses, imperfection of human cognition in recalling stories and accounts, and bias from employees who took the study. In terms of the data collection method, there are also some disadvantages to interviewing in person, as well as over the phone.

PREFACE

The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of taking an organizationally-provided Clear Leadership course on participants. This study was conducted at BC Clinical and Support Services (BCCSS) which is now integrated into Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). It is administered by Ms. Mariel Conti, an undergraduate of the Beedie School of Business, under the supervision of Dr. Gervase Bushe.

The course itself is designed by Dr. Bushe, but is delivered by in-house personnel. In the past 3 to 4 years, there have been 173 active employees who have taken the course. The study specifically focuses on 5 different aspects of Clear Leadership: self-awareness, the descriptive self, the curious self, self-differentiation and partnership.

This report starts with a definition of the language used which is from the Clear Leadership book written by Dr. Bushe. It is then followed by the method of data collection, and an explanation of why interviews were chosen as means for gathering information. The results section go in depth about the findings from the interview; it dissects multi-part questions, as well as important discoveries from the pre-interview survey.

CLEAR LEADERSHIP

This section defines the vocabulary used throughout the report.

The Clear Leadership program promotes becoming aware of an individual's sense-making (defined in the paragraph below) and taking steps to check out these stories as opposed to acting on it; it provides several techniques for having conversations resulting to understanding one's own experience and other people's experiences which is referred to as interpersonal clarity (Bushe, 2009, p. 12).

SELF-AWARENESS

The first part of the study is determines participants' perceptions of increased self-awareness. As defined in the program, being self-aware constitutes an understanding thoughts, feelings, observations and wants on a moment to moment basis (Bushe, 2009, p. 12). When someone is aware, she can comprehend the process of creating her own experience and is clear between how much are based on facts or are based on her personal sense making. Sense-making occurs when people explain their experiences within a framework that gives consistency and meaning to what they perceive (Bushe, 2009, p. 8)

THE DESCRIPTIVE SELF

The next part of the study is the descriptive self. A person who is successful at being descriptive can describe all the facets of his experience clearly; that is, he can be transparent. He is also able to describe difficult aspects of his experience in a way that prevents defensiveness among others (Bushe, 2009, p. 12).

THE CURIOUS SELF

When a person is curious, she is able to uncover other people's experience by observing, questioning and probing. By doing so, she can understand what her peers are thinking, feeling, and wanting, as well as increase their awareness during the process (Bushe, 2009, p. 12). In this section, participants are also asked about the level of interpersonal mush after the study. Interpersonal mush are interactions between people based on stories they have created about each other and have not been checked with the other person (Bushe, 2009, p. 4).

SELF-DIFFERENTIATION

The next section asked whether participants thought they had increased their self-differentiation. A person acts differentiated if she is able to be connected others while simultaneously being separated. By doing this, her thoughts and feelings cannot be affected by other people; this individual neither takes responsibility for other people's experiences nor do they demand to change their thoughts and feelings (Bushe, 2009, p. 12).

PARTNERSHIP

The last section studies how partnership is affected by the Clear Leadership program. Partnership occurs when 2 or more people each feels responsible for the success of a their common purpose; usually, people would like to be in partnership with their bosses, subordinates, colleagues, customers and suppliers. Learning conversations enhance partnerships. Through a learning conversation, interpersonal clarity is achieved. Interpersonal clarity is described as an interaction in which people know what their own experience is, what another person's experience is and the difference between the two. According to Bushe, "Taking the time every so often to have a learning conversation and clear out the mush is essential to sustaining partnership (Bushe, 2009, p. 49).

METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The impact of taking an organizationally-provided Clear Leadership course on participants was investigated by interviewing a randomly stratified sample. Hayra Houlihan and John Arsenault served as champions of the study within the organization. Hayra divided all those who had taken the course into 15 categories based on their level in the organization and where they worked, namely corporate, supply chain, financial employee services and tech services. She then randomly contacted 51 employees and requested for their voluntary participation through email. From the 51 contacted, 13 employees voluntarily accepted to participate in the study. 7 participants were interviewed in person while 6 were

interviewed over the phone. See appendix A for the interview questions list. Prior to the interview, participants were also asked to read through the consent information document (see appendix B) and complete a pre-interview survey (see appendix C). A verbal consent was recorded by the interviewer, Ms. Conti, as well as the entire duration of the interview, with participants' consent. Lastly, notes were transcribed by Ms. Conti.

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Interviews were chosen as the method of data collection because gathering qualitative research allows for an open-ended exploration of participant's experience. According to the interview article, "the value of interviewing is not only because it builds a holistic snapshot, analyses words, reports detailed views of information; but also because it enables interviewees to speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings" (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 39). It was especially important to collect this kind of information as the Clear Leadership program is highly experience-based. However, since some respondents were short on time, they were only able to interview over the phone. The advantage of telephone interviews is that not only were data capture, but it is also more anonymous than face to face interviews; with this said, it is beneficial for sharing of potentially sensitive information (Lord, Bolton, N., Fleming, & Anderson, 2016, p. 796).

The interview was semi-structured, consisting of both open and closed questions. In addition, probing and non leading questions were asked. Lastly questions were short and asked one at a time to ensure that participants were able to focus and not have such an overloaded response.

RESULTS

SELF-AWARENESS

Participants were asked if they recognize any difference in how they notice or think about their experience. 100% of them responded that Clear Leadership has had a positive impact in this aspect. They reported that they try, as much as possible, to separate thinking and feeling, and remove any preconceived notions. In addition, they are also aware that their experiences are different from that of others.

However, when they were asked about the effect this has in their relationships at home and work, 62% stated that it is harder to be self-aware at home. A senior manager stated that "it is harder at home because I am less likely to take the time to reflect...I also take the people at home for granted; another manager said, "there may be some opportunities with my spouse but not so much." In alignment with this, when participants were asked in the pre-interview survey how the course improved their relationships at home, the average score was a 4.7 out of 7. This was the lowest amongst all the average

scores (see Appendix D). An employee explained that she tends to use techniques more in the office as opposed to her personal life.

THE DESCRIPTIVE SELF

77% of participants responded that they notice themselves making more of an effort to be transparent to others. These people tend to elaborate more on their thought process and are weary about how their words land on others. A manager stated that she needs to be very transparent in her role; for instance, she makes the purpose, outcomes and takeaways from meetings very clear. From her experience, being transparent gets people's buy in early and encourages others to also be descriptive of their thoughts. According to another employee, the intent is there for him whether he is achieving it or not; he tries to focus the conversation in the expectation and seeks clarity when needed.

On the other hand, 23% of respondents stated that they are unaware if they making more effort to be transparent. A senior manager explained saying that he doesn't know if the course has improved his transparency since he was already open to others beforehand; another senior manager stated that the course improved her being transparent but it was "not a great deal."

Some ideas that have been helpful from the course in terms of being transparent were "I versus You" statements, walking the cube and sense-making.

THE CURIOUS SELF

92% of participants state that they notice their own sense-making more since taking the course. This majority try not to make up stories about others; instead, they go with facts to mitigate story making. A senior manager expands "what I try to remind myself is not to assume things of other people...I try to make sure that I don't have preconceived ideas about different situations. I've gotten better with dealing with facts after the course." As much as possible graduates of the course try to listen before forming opinions.

When asked whether people are likely to ask others what their experience is, 92% answered yes. A participant said he tends to ask others what their story is and tries not to change it; rather, he aims to see where the misalignment lies.

They were also asked "do you operate in more, less or the same amount of the mush?" To this, 100% of participants responded that they operate less in interpersonal mush. They either try avoid or catch themselves once they realize they are in the mush.

SELF-DIFFERENTIATION

When participants were asked if they are more aware of trying to be separate and connected to people at the same time, 8% said yes, but only slightly. 15% said that this is an area they haven't been able to work on. The other 15% claimed that they don't know; a senior manager stated that she "hasn't focused

her self-awareness on that.” The remainder, 62%, stated that the course made them more aware of trying not to be fused to the best of their ability. An employee explains “what I have noticed is that I try to do something and get input from others on the way I’m doing it...you can’t take the world on yourself but you can still be a leader...you need to be differentiating yourself while still listening.” Self-differentiation had an average score of 5.6 out of 7 on the pre-interview survey.

PARTNERSHIP

92% of respondents stated that the Clear Leadership course had a positive impact in their success at collaborating in their workplace. An employee stated that the course definitely improved collaboration for him; for instance if a person was avoiding him, he would talk to them using the cube (thoughts, feelings, observations and wants). He would explain his observations especially if the person is not being responsive. The other 8% mentioned they can’t fully remember because the 4-day course was extensive. This employee stated, “with any course that’s 4 days, concepts tend to become a blur.”

The second part of this question is if participants use learning conversations. 54% of participants are having regularly learning conversations since taking the course. One states that she either brings it up or facilitates between members from her team. 31% have used learning conversations only a few times, and 15% have used it more informally. A manager states, “I do have it in general but not to the extent that we did in the course...I look at specific learning points as opposed to having it in a procedural manner.” In addition, pinch conversations were mentioned often as a tool for clarity. Learning conversations received an average score of 5.6 out of 7 on the pre-interview survey.

As stated earlier, partnership involves relationships with coworkers, namely, bosses, subordinates and customers. In the pre-interview survey, participants were asked to rate how comfortable they are in getting clear (“being real”) with their boss. The average score was also a 5.6 out of 7. One mentioned that she generally feels uneasy talking to bosses about issues.

OVERALL IMPACT

100% of participants said that the course made a positive impact on them and the organization. They said that it made them a better leader and allowed for more open and honest dialogue with colleagues. A manager said that the course “set the standard of expectation from senior leaders around good management techniques in an open environment that emphasizes a respectful workplace...I noticed that people were going back in their teams and introducing concepts they learned; this filtered outwards to the whole organization.” Another employee also spoke about how the course helped to listen, not assume and ask for feedback. Clear Leadership also helped BCCSS immensely according to the participants in that people in the management level were able to have a shared understanding of how they should be working. For instance, one highlighted that if they get off topic, they usually say “let’s get to the mush here.” It helps by familiarizing the same terminology, especially as tools in meetings. The

average score for the pre-interview survey question “looking back on it now, how would you rate the course overall” scored the highest, amounting to 6.2 out of 7.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

COURSE FOLLOW-UP

When participants were asked “could the impact could have been better and if so, what would have had to happen,” 77% suggested some kind of reinforcement or refresher in order to retain concepts learned. A senior manager stated that it was difficult to sustain the culture within the organization; he elaborated saying that a support network would help ingrain the culture of clarity. Another mentioned that it would be better if there was “some follow up to talk about it so that it doesn’t fade away.” Others proposed having monthly or bi-monthly opportunities or triads to regroup in order to keep accountability to the concepts and familiarity. Furthermore, an employee mentioned that taking the course for the second time was more fruitful for him since it solidified information learned.

COURSE OFFERING

Another recommendation was to spread out days in which the course is offered. A couple participants mentioned that taking the program within 4 consecutive days is intense and “becomes a blur.” On the other hand, one employee appreciated dates that were spread out since it gave her an opportunity to apply concepts learned.

One employee also wished that the course was offered to everyone, not just leaders. She stated that “there was a dedicated effort to roll this out to leaders. It promoted common understanding on how to address conversations and conflict, and mitigate them through learning and pinch conversations...I think the impact would be better if it was offered to everyone, not just the leadership team.”

COURSE APPLICATION

It is important to note the result of the pre-interview survey on question 5 (see appendix D). When participants were asked to rate “I see others using the skills at work,” the average score was 4.8 out of 7 which is the second lowest score in the survey results. An employee elaborates saying that BCCSS has gone through many changes, especially with the integration to PHSA. She believes there has been a stale mark in the organization, most likely attributable to the leadership change. Although there is a poster of the CUBE in every meeting room, she doesn’t see it practiced. Similarly, a senior manager finds that graduates from the course are not living out concepts day to day. He states “we put on the course to help us be better communicators and to get rid of all the mush but I find a lot of people will go back and forth with emails creating their own interpretation of things rather than discussing it.” There seems to be then a lack of application of course materials which can be the result of the lack of reinforcement.

CONCLUSION

MAIN IDEAS

The main concepts utilized by participants from the Clear Leadership course are the I-language (using I versus you), walking the CUBE (observations, thoughts, feelings, and wants), learning conversations as well as pinch conversations.

In terms of self-awareness, all participants recognize a difference in how they notice or think about their experience. For the descriptive self, majority of people said they do notice themselves making more of an effort to be transparent to others. In terms of the curious self, almost all the participants stated that they notice their own sense-making, are likely to ask others of their experience and operate less in the mush. The area participants seemed to have the most difficulty transferring after the course is increasing their self-differentiation. Only a little more than half that they are either unaware or don't pay attention to being separate and connected to people at the same time. On the other hand, a little more than half stated that they are successful in doing so. For partnership, almost all respondents stated that Clear Leadership had a positive impact on their success at collaboration at work. Majority of them also use learning conversations, some more regularly, others a few times and informally. Overall, participants responded saying that the course has had a positive impact on them and the organization. Lastly, to improve the course, majority of the participants recommended some kind of reinforcement be established so that they can more easily remember concepts learned from the Clear Leadership course.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

However, precautions should be taken in assuming the results reflect the whole organization. For one, numerous open-ended question were asked. Although this resulted to rich variety of responses, answers were not as consistent. In addition, because of the imperfection of the human cognition, stories and accounts of participants may not be fully valid. There may also be some bias from employees who volunteered their time to be part of the study; that is, it may be the case that people who had positive experiences may have been more inclined to participate.

In terms of the data collection method, there are some disadvantages to interviewing. Face-to-face interviews are never 100% anonymous because of its nature; this may, therefore, lead to potential subconscious bias (Madill, 2012). Interviews also tend to be a smaller scale study because it is time-consuming to conduct it. On the other hand, there are disadvantages to telephone interviews. One of it being the absence of nonverbal communication during the conversation. An article emphasizes the importance of body language and paralanguage for communication effectiveness; visual cues are often relied upon by interviewers to help develop rapport and to assess the authenticity of the participant (Lord, Bolton, N., Fleming, & Anderson, 2016, p. 793).

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Self-Awareness:

Since the course do you notice any difference in how you notice or think about your experience? (probes – has this made a difference to you? Effect on your relationships home and work)

The Descriptive Self:

Since the course, do you notice yourself making more of an effort to be transparent to others? (probes – has this made a difference in your relationships? What idea from the course have been helpful in being transparent?)

The Curious Self:

Since the course, do you notice your sense-making more? Are you more likely to ask others what their experience is? (probe: do you think you operate in more, less or the same amount of mush?)

Self Differentiation:

Since the course, are you more aware of trying to be separate and connected to people at the same time? (Probe: impact of that on relationships. On self)

Partnership

Do you think the course has had any impact on your success at collaborating at work? (probe: use of learning conversations? framing problem patterns, etc.?)

Overall, what do you think the impact of the course has been on you and on the organization? (probe: could the impact have been better and if so, what would have had to happen?)

APPENDIX B: CONSENT INFORMATION



BEEDIE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Consent to Participate in a study of the Impact of Clear Leadership at BCCSS Study # 2018s0428

Mariel Conti, a student at SFU, under the supervision of Dr. Gervase Bushe (the principal investigator) from the Beedie School of Business (bushe@sfu.ca) are doing a study to get your impressions on the impact of your participation in the Clear Leadership Course.

Before Ms Conti begins to interview you, she will ask if you have read this consent document, answer any questions you have, and then ask for your verbal consent to participate in the study. You have been randomly selected to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can stop participating in the study at any time.

As part of the study you will be asked to complete a short 12 item survey and be interviewed for 20-30 minutes. If you agree, the interview will be recorded to allow for later analysis.

The answers you give to the survey and the interview will be transcribed in digital format and assigned a code number so that you will be anonymized. Your answers will only be seen and heard by researchers at SFU. Your survey will be destroyed once your answers have been entered into a database with only your code number. These documents will be kept on the computers of Dr. Bushe and Ms Conti until the study is completed. Then they will be deleted from those computers and put on a disk that will be locked in a file cabinet at SFU and, with your consent, may be used in future studies of the impact of Clear Leadership Training. If you prefer that your data not be retained we will delete it after the study is complete.

There are no known potential risks to you from participating in this study.

The main benefit to BCCSS/PHSA will be receiving a report on the general findings that might aid in future decisions about leadership development. This report will also serve as an assignment for Ms Conti in a directed studies course.

If, after you participate in the study, you wish to withdraw your survey, interview, or both from the study, simply contact Dr. Bushe and all your documents will be deleted.

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics jtoward@sfu.ca or 778-782-6593.

APPENDIX C: PRE-INTERVIEW SURVEY

Name: _____

Date: _____

		Low -----High						
1	Looking back on it now, how would you rate the course overall?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	How much did it improve your relationships at work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	How much did it improve your relationships at home?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you agree/disagree with the following? Since taking the course...		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	I've incorporated Clear Leadership into my everyday life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I see others using the skills at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I take more responsibility for increasing interpersonal clarity with partners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	I make more of an effort to ensure people don't have to make up what's in my head	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	I feel comfortable getting clear (being real) with my boss	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	I have learning conversations when needed (not necessarily formal ones – but conversations to clear out the mush)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	I work at being self-differentiated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	I work at utilizing an appreciative mindset	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	The quality of my partnerships has, in general, improved	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX D: SURVEY RESULTS

SURVEY QUESTIONS	AVERAGE SCORE
<i>For the first 3 survey questions, the answers correspond to the following scale: Low (1) to High (7)</i>	<i>Sum of All responses divided by total number of responses (13)</i>
Survey Question 1: Looking back on it now, how would you rate the course overall?	6.2
Survey Question 2: How much did it improve your relationships at work?	5.6
Survey Question 3: How much did it improve your relationships at home?	4.7
<i>For the 4th survey question and onwards, the answers correspond to the following scale: Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7)</i>	
Survey Question 4: I've incorporated Clear Leadership into my everyday life	5.7
Survey Question 5: I see others using the skills at work	4.8
Survey Question 6: I take more responsibility for increasing interpersonal clarity with partners	6.1
Survey Question 7: I make more of an effort to ensure people don't have to make up what's in my head	5.9
Survey Question 8: I feel comfortable getting clear (being real) with my boss	5.5
Survey Question 9: I have learning conversations when needed (not necessarily formal ones - but conversations to clear out the mush)	5.6
Survey Question 10: I work at being self-differentiated	5.6
Survey Question 11: I work at utilizing an appreciative mindset	5.7
Survey Question 12: The quality of my partnership has, in general improved	5.8

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