



This free download is an excerpt From Chapter 7 pp 111 – 117 of **Leadership Levers: releasing the power of relationships for exceptional participation, alignment, and team results**, by Diana Jones ©

Generating Seismic Shifts with Fine Touches

Leaders who make small shifts in how they work with groups can release their team members' desire and capacity to participate and contribute to exceptional results. Expect vitality to underpin in your interactions, and refuse to be trapped by behavior patterns that have passed their use-by-date.

In Chapter 3, I wrote of the leader using the right sockets to work well with groups. When leaders use specific principles and processes in their interactions, they are likely to power up and achieve the results they want. In this chapter, we'll discuss six seismic shifts, their allied processes, and give examples. In Chapter 3, we saw the greatest shift for leaders is from preparing content and knowledge to focusing on accessing participants' capacities. Leaders do this through their relationship with participants, by operating as a catalyst for relationships among participants. In this chapter, we discuss how the greatest shift for leaders is from being creatures of habit to thoughtfully working with six seismic shifts focused on both the leader's relationship with participants and the relationships among participants themselves.

The great leap for authoritarian, chaotic, and habitual leaders who want to lead great meetings is to develop a behavioral mindset. Imagine, for example, you are the welcoming inclusive host, an appreciative peer, the accountable direction setter, the wise insightful talent spotter, the succinct purposeful visionary, the inviting navigator, the astute question designer, and the ruthless personable conductor.

These leadership behaviors result in participants being wholeheartedly present. Participants make a transition from their previous interactions, which might be anything from hearing of a failed budget bid to leading a tricky performance conversation, being in an intense board meeting, or worrying one of their children isn't well and needs attention. Contrast this with leaders who dive into the contents of their meeting before everyone has mentally arrived. They may be there physically, but mindfully and wholeheartedly—they're all somewhere else. A transition to a new work meeting takes several minutes for most people.

Anything less than these behaviors results in either compliant participants or people who become defensive. The wide range of defensive behaviors comes to the fore.

Leaders need to ensure everyone is welcomed, included, accepted, and confident their contribution will be heard. When this doesn't happen, the result is personal chaos, and participants warm up to fighting the leader, and anyone who aligns with them.

Ground rules don't work. As soon as tensions rise, the carefully agreed compliant behaviors fly out the window.

SEISMIC SHIFT 1: FROM FOLLOWING THE AGENDA TO SHAPING THE FIRST FOUR MINUTES—SIX PRINCIPLES FOR POWERFUL PURPOSEFUL MEETINGS

In practice, these six principles take the first four minutes of each of your meetings. There are two areas of concentrated preparation:

- Deciding the *outcome* you want from each meeting
- Clarifying a simple worthwhile *process* for people to make their best contributions with each agenda item.

SIX PRINCIPLES FOR POWERFUL GROUP INTERACTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

The role of the leader here is to help participants *arrive* and warmup to you as leader, to the setting, the purpose of their interactions, and their own valuable contributions. They will then make the transition to the current setting and see how their contributions will influence outcomes that are also important to them.

The six principles come through your metacommunication to your group—a communication about what is going to happen and how people can contribute, rather than just diving in haphazardly. This approach addresses each of Schein's interpersonal needs of inclusion or identity, control, influence and power, and acceptance and intimacy, outlined in Chapter 3.

1. Begin with an Inclusive Welcome

Two interwoven ideas form beginnings. The first is that the leader has the function as the welcoming inclusive host and the second is that every moment is a chance for a fresh beginning.

The best way to mark a fresh beginning is to know who's with you and to welcome each and every one of them. The most simple beginning is: Hello everyone. Other welcomes don't work. Hi is informal and warms people up to social interactions, rather than to purposeful work interactions. Good morning or good afternoon rockets everyone back to school days and you'll more than likely hear Good morning Miss, or good afternoon Sir in response.

Most will have come directly from other meetings or interactions. The inclusive welcome marks the beginning of a fresh interaction, and most likely a new purpose. This enables people to begin their transition to this new purpose.

2. Express Your Appreciation

Simple is best here. *Thank you for coming, or thank you for being here.* Staff who know they are appreciated are more motivated, more productive, and go the extra mile. Leaders can ensure everyone brings their best to group interactions and decisions by a simple expression of appreciation.

Simple, sincere appreciations appear as social niceties, yet are powerful motivators.

3. Consolidate Your Relationship with the Group as Leader with an "I" Statement

Here, leaders make an easy self-disclosure and affirm themselves in their relationship with the group:

I am pleased to see you all here

I am looking forward to our conversation today

I am excited we are grappling with what is in front of us I am looking forward to taking our next step with XXX

This is the moment you identify as the leader and participants settle in to being listeners or contributors. Oddly enough, many leaders completely fudge this step. Rather than being accountable and using the assertion "I," they default to passive language and use "It." They overlook this opportunity for leadership. Meeting participants feel disappointed in the lack of leadership, and in not being acknowledged. The rot sets in from there.

A sincere and simple "I" statement builds participants' sense of appreciation of you as leader, engenders their confidence that you are in control, and consolidates your working relationship with them.

4. Show Your Respect for Group Members by Acknowledging Their Experience and Expertise

When you omit this step, participants feel taken for granted. They sense leaders have gone one-up, and put them one-down. They feel dominated. Their default response is to warm up to be competitive, aggressively fight, or “absent” themselves and not bother participating. They lose interest in finding common ground or developing innovative solutions. Opportunity is lost.

The beginning of every meeting is another chance for leaders to set peer interactions in place where everyone who wants to contribute can do so.

Examples include:

- Each of you brings a depth of expertise and experience which helps us tackle what is in front of us
- I know each person has had ideas and experience which we need in order to create a breakthrough in this area
- I am confident that the talent around this table will land us where we want to be

Dominic chairs a local college board in a fast growing suburb. Their meeting is focused on strategy. They anticipate rapid growth in student numbers in their school over the next five years, with large numbers of residents choosing this attractive location. He acknowledges to his board,

“Each of you brings a breadth and depth of experience of this community and the power of education to this conversation. Your hopes for your own children and your vision for future students in our area will shape how you think about how this college can continue to ensure our students flourish.”

5. Identify the Purpose of the Meeting and/or the Outcome

This is the “Ta dah!” moment—the reason why people have gathered together, either online or in person. It’s the chance to make everyone’s commitment worthwhile. It’s the moment you and the group commit to align and work together.

At a microlevel, identifying purpose and/or outcomes of every agenda item brings vitality to meetings. People shift from being automatons to accessing their spontaneity. Who would have thought! Like each of you, I have been to thousands of meetings. I can identify only a handful of leaders who began their interactions with a clear purpose or outcome.

The distinction between purpose and outcome is both slim and helpful. *Purpose* identifies an intention. *Outcomes* have a specific measurable result expressed, as if it’s already a fact. I focus on agenda items and meeting outcomes using a past tense verb.

By the end of this meeting we will have:

- Established ...
- Clarified ...
- Implemented ...
- Found a way forward ...
- Resolved ...
- Taken the next step toward ...

Ensure any written agenda states the outcome being sought within each item.

6. Outline a Process for Participation

Why is it that so many meetings go awry? Levels of meaningful participation are low. Participants tend to replicate default survival behaviors from earlier experience of family mealtimes, their cultural settings, major life events, or their former early school days. They dominate by overtalking and over participating, or remain silent and watchful—all the time wishing they were somewhere else.

Without structure for people to participate, it's no wonder meetings don't work.

- When the leader gives clear direction for processes to participate, people know how to collaborate. The leader's direction can be as simple as the following:
- I'll take five minutes to discuss the major benefits to the business and how we can navigate the roadblocks. Then I'll invite each of you to make your best contribution on the impact on your area as we discuss how to best implement this.
- And there you have it. This is the preparation for leaders who want to have powerful, purposeful interactions in group settings. For both online and in-person meetings, my best advice for presenters and meeting chairs is to use these six principles to lead the first four minutes of every meeting. The outcomes are that people are individually welcomed, the relationships between staff and the leader are clear. When team members know their efforts to make the meeting a priority are appreciated, they become present both personally and professionally. In knowing their contributions are being sought and how they can contribute, everyone relaxes confident they are in for a purposeful satisfying meeting (Table 7.1).

TABLE 7.1

Six Principles of Exceptional Meetings

Principle	Example	Note your approach
1. An inclusive welcome	Hello everyone	
2. Express your Appreciation	Thank you for coming	
3. Your Personal communication	I am pleased to see you all here, and I'm excited about the work we have ahead of us	
4. Acknowledgments	I know each and every one of you brings considerable experience and expertise to our work together	
5. The outcome or purpose of the meeting	<p>The purpose of this meeting is to ...or</p> <p>By the end of this meeting, we will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established... • Clarified... • Implement... • Discovered a way forward... • Resolved... • Taken the next step toward.. 	
6. A process for participation	<p>Let those there know how you want to proceed:</p> <p><i>I'm going to share my vision with you for ten minutes, then I want to hear a response from each of you. What resonated with you? Was there anything that made your heart sink?</i></p>	

About Leadership Levers

There's an epidemic of leadership failure—whether something as small as a meeting, or as large as implementing enterprise wide change. Leaders know that sinking feeling when a gap emerges between themselves and the groups they most need to engage with. Leaders and business schools are looking in the wrong places for the cause.

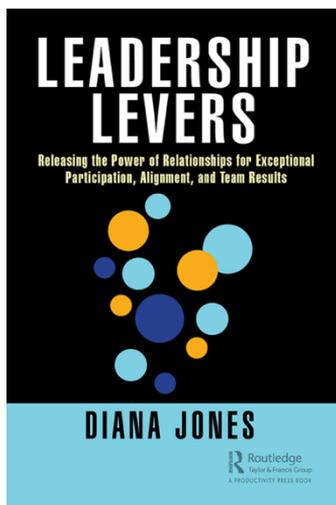
What holds most leaders back, as if their foot is always on the brake, is their failure to engage, and gain alignment. This book shows the reasons why.

Leaders rarely recognise that:

1. Shaping group behavior is describable as a process, which they can learn. Instead, they unconsciously fall into relationship patterns influenced by early family experiences.
2. Informal relationship patterns have a dramatic effect on results, which is why birds in flight manage to alter course without bumping into each other.

Leadership and collaboration are primarily a matter of principles and process, and not personality and content alone. If leaders master the process, they achieve consistent results.

This book reveals the leadership levers to release the power of relationships for exceptional participation, alignment and results in organizations. It enables leaders to mine the brilliance that often lies dormant and untapped within their organizations. Readers will have the principles and tools to go beyond the agenda, truly engage with those around them, and release untapped capacities within their organizations.



Buy your copy at Amazon or your local book store

For 10 or more copies

North and South America:
orders@taylorandfrancis.com

Australia and New Zealand:
books@tandf.com.au

UK, Europe and rest of world:
cis@tandf.co.uk

About Diana Jones

Diana Jones is a trusted and experienced leadership coach working with senior leaders and their leadership teams within federal agencies, local government, small-to-medium enterprises, non-government organizations, and not-for-profits. She works across a wide range of sectors including health, business and innovation, transport, primary industries, security, education, and social services.

She has travelled through more than 30 countries and brings both a professional and personal experiential base that supports the wisdom in the book.

She specializes in real work environments where she observes the dynamics and interrelationships in work interconnections, the flow-on behaviors, and implications for business results. She coaches groups of

experienced executives from different organizations exploring live scenarios with not-so-sure responses, then integrating learning from their peers.

A trainer, educator and practitioner with the Australia Aotearoa New Zealand Psychodrama Association, she is one a handful of sociometrists in the world with behavioral change consultants, trainers, coaches, and therapists.

She has a master's degree from Victoria University of Wellington, and is a past treasurer and executive member of an international professional association, and former chair of the Wellington Homeless Women's Trust. She was inducted into the Alan Weiss Million Dollar Consulting Hall of Fame in 2020.