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Self Awareness for Leaders – Insight Leading to Wisdom

Author Sarah Cornally

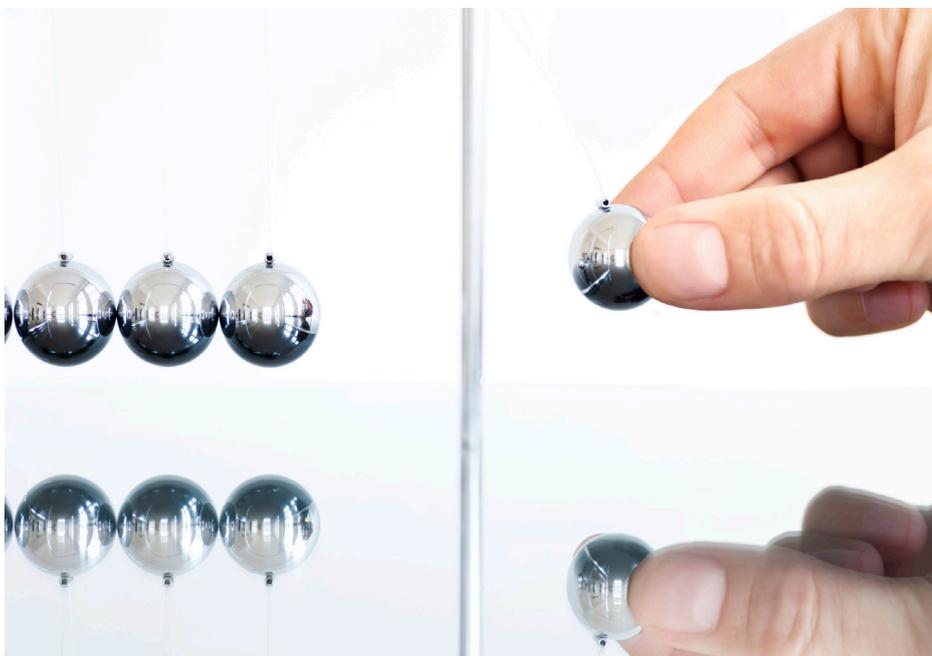
Have you ever observed someone's actions as they are trying hard to achieve a result? It is clear to you what they need to be successful, but they can't see it. Try as you might to enlighten them, they just don't get it. It is as if they can't admit something to themselves and the struggle continues.

On the other hand, there are situations where suddenly the penny drops as they open up and understand something anew. They recognise a distinction in the situation that they had missed which enables them to take effective action and realise the results they are seeking.

This is the power of self awareness. It is the act of being aware of the self as a player in the mix. You are one of the forces at play in any situation in which you are involved.

Whatever is going on in our inner world has an effect on our emotional and mental states, and behaviour. It is common for people to be unaware of this. They justify their actions by blaming others, denying their own role in the situation or emphasizing their good intentions. By denying the influence of their inner world, they avoid the insights that would enable them to be more effective.

When we can get an accurate, objective perspective of our leadership, we gain a perspective and understanding of the impact we have. We are able to make choices that lead to enhanced influence and performance, especially when we are seeking to engage others.



People expect a higher standard of leaders who have more power or authority. We expect them to use it appropriately and skilfully, or they lose our trust and respect. Where there is a lack of trust and sense of fairness in an organization it has a very corrosive effect. Any lack of awareness in these leaders can lead to inappropriate actions, such as destructive political games, intolerance, arrogance, excessive drive, conservatism, passive aggressiveness, perfectionism or indecisiveness. These things erode leadership effectiveness.

One of the most common examples I see is the person who refuses to take responsibility for the effect they have on other people. Getting frustrated and resentful about people whose

behaviour you don't like doesn't change anything. People who are defensive simply get more so in those circumstances. If instead you seek to understand what drives others, you can conduct yourself in ways that will positively influence their responses.

Being aware about how our own conduct affects others allows us to make some insightful choices. Those choices can lead to enhanced influence and performance, especially when we are seeking to engage others.



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Much of what determines our ability to be self-aware is our relationship with ourselves. If we have a healthy self-image – if we know and like who we are, and can respond to what we discover about ourselves without defensiveness – the pursuit of self awareness will be a productive exercise. If not, we will tend to be anxious and resistant for fear of what we will discover and what that would demand of us.

Here are some questions to assist you to reflect on your leadership effectiveness and become more self-aware.

1. What sort of leader are you – task focused or relationship focused?
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Whats their impact on others?
3. How effective are you at influencing others, especially people who you don't like or find frustrating?
4. What effects do you create through your own behaviour?
5. What pushes your buttons? How do you react? What effect does that have on others?
6. In what areas do you meet resistance or opposition?

To discuss how Sarah Cornally can customise a leadership effectiveness program for your team or organisation please email info@sarahcornally.com

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