Quiet Leadership

Most of us have had to endure the painful experience of working with someone who thinks they know-it-all. While it's easy to spot this arrogance in others, we're usually blind to our own similar tendencies.

In a recent strategy + business blog post by Susan Cramm, leadership coach and author, she cites David Rock's book, *Quiet Leadership*, where he explains that leaders can best improve their teams' performance by encouraging better thinking, not by handing out advice.

According to Rock, "A quiet leader gives less advice than almost anyone else on the planet" because they realize that advice is usually:

- Autobiographical: it's based on the needs and experiences of the giver, not the recipient.
- Misdirected: it's focused on the wrong problem.
- Rejected: it's virtually impossible to get people to act solely by giving them advice.

Quiet leaders focus on helping others find insights, Rather than solving the problem for them, they help them improve how they are thinking about the problem.

Like any habit, breaking out of the advice trap is hard work. But it can pay off by focusing on several key objectives.

- Eliminate "why" from your vocabulary, because it focuses on the past rather than the future and puts people on the defensive.
- Embrace the fundamental delegation principle that while you have the final vote on what needs to be done, your team has the final say over how to get it done.
- Be mindful of the number of times your conversations focus on exploring solutions rather than dissecting problems.
- Replace declarative statements such as "you should…" or "I think…" with open-ended questions.
- Encourage progress without striving for perfection.

Quiet leaders are very suspicious of questions. They understand that hiding behind the questions are problem solvers waiting to be developed and that, by remaining relatively quiet, in time, people will stop coming to them for answers and learn to think on their own.