

The CEO Syndrome

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One of the greatest threats facing leaders today is making decisions based on information that is incomplete, partially hidden or compromised in some way. Many CEOs we have worked with over the years have told us that they so often sense that they are not getting the truth. They cannot name or define what their sense of unease or apprehension regarding the information they have received is about, because they know that no one is actually lying to them. However, they can sense that something is not quite right; they sense that people are masking or holding back information, or sometimes creating smoke screens to conceal key points. In most cases, they know that these people are not actually dishonest or untrustworthy, but neither are they telling the CEO or Board everything they need to know.



How do you know that the information you receive as staff leader or a Board member is objective and unbiased? What creates the environment where information is regularly filtered, biased or withheld? What can you do to ensure that information you receive is reflective of the actual situation and possibilities, and not created from someone's bias. Have you ever asked the question "Why is it I feel as if I am not always getting the truth? People aren't necessarily lying, yet I feel as if people are hiding the truth, or camouflaging it in some way." This is what we have termed the CEO Syndrome.

The controversy surrounding the CEO Syndrome is that we believe that you, as the person receiving or relying on information, actively create this syndrome for yourself. Already I can hear you thinking "What, I've created this? For what reason would I create this, when I really need unbiased and objective reports? How have

I created this?"

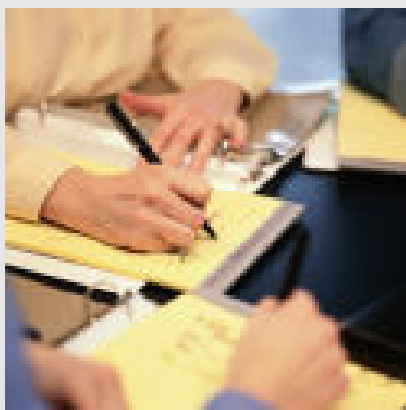
The type of information that staff and others provide you is a direct result of how you have chosen to receive information in the past, what questions you have asked, and whether you have any fixed points of view. Every fixed point of view that you have about anything creates the limitations and parameters from which you receive it. Leaders with a fixed point of view often say phrases such as "Oh no, that's not the way it is" and they often focus their attention on the 'why something can't be done'. Attachment to your own point of view is a make or break problem for many people, it blinds you to other possibilities. With a fixed point of view, you can't see anything that doesn't match your point of view. When information is presented in ways that do not match your view, you will not be able to receive it and often reject the information, or in the worse case, execute the messenger who delivers the information. When you have a fixed point of view you tend to be very attached to past reference points, and are not willing to take risks. You will

fail to invite the truth, which can leave you prey to the CEO Syndrome.

The CEO Syndrome, in other words, causes you to operate with a distorted sense of reality and creates an insulated culture that systematically excludes any information that does not fit or contradicts your point of view.

Staff will only provide you with information that they judge you are willing to receive. If you have a pattern of showing that you are unwilling to receive, through your comments, actions, lack of actions, sarcasm or reaction, then you will only be given that information which others perceive you are able to deal with. You will be living with the CEO Syndrome. On the other hand, if you have shown that you are willing to receive all, without judgement, then you will receive all facets of information from many different points of view, as staff will not be worried or concerned about how you will receive it, or the effect this delivery of information will have on them. You have chosen to be conscious and aware.

The key difference between a conscious leader and the leader who functions from the CEO Syndrome is that the conscious leader focuses on receiving all information no matter what it looks like by asking the right questions and by being open to receive everything without judgment. The conscious leader knows that they cannot receive all the information without asking the right questions. The ability to truly receive all information, right or wrong, good or bad, without judgment and without a fixed point of view, are talents and abilities that we all have, but rarely use. The good news is that using these talents and abilities is just a matter of choice.



Three Tools to combat the CEO Syndrome

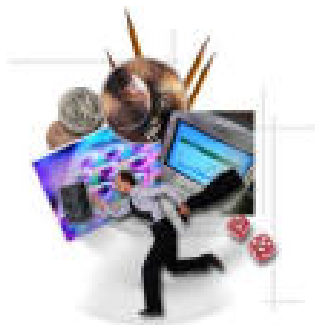
So how do you turn this situation around so that you are receiving all relevant information, without filtering, camouflage or omission? There are three main tools that will assist in combating the CEO Syndrome: Receiving without Judgement, Living in the Question, and having No Fixed Point of View. These tools, whilst simple, are so powerful in unleashing the truth and realities and opportunities around you that they have the power to totally transform your organisation, your staff and you. (These tools, and many more, are described in detail in the new book "Conscious leadership: the key to unlocking success"; see www.lifemastery.com.au)

Tool 1. Receiving without Judgement

Receiving involves 'no resistance'; it is about remaining constantly open, vulnerable and unresisting to any point of view put to you by staff, other leaders or stakeholders. You are able to receive everything with true gratitude, without any sense of obligation or judgment. You do not resist or react to any interaction with anything or anyone. You recognize that whatever you cannot receive becomes a limitation. Whenever you are unwilling to receive certain points of view, or even certain people, you are functioning from separation, judgment, expectation, projection, and rejection.

For you to create truly conscious decisions, you must function from your knowing and awareness, and must be willing to function from no fixed point of view. A fixed point of view creates limitation because whenever you have a fixed point of view, you try to defend it. The moment you try to defend anything, you are no longer free to choose.

This means that you must have no resistance, no rejection, no negation and no refusal of any concept or relationship. This means no judgment in your mind and a willingness to be aware fully of anything possible. Judgment generates irregular fear that can induce a destructive, toxic and caustic state within those who produce or are reliant on information to make business decisions. When you generate judgment, you cannot perceive anything that doesn't match your judgment. The remedy for this is to be willing to receive everything, to experience life without mental resistance or judgment.



Imperturbability and freedom is the ultimate by-product of a willingness to receive everything in life. This is the intrinsic state of being when you are not disturbed and cannot be troubled by anything that happens in your life. It is necessary to recognise that 'willingness to receive everything' does not mean you have to allow others to control you or have power over you. Every time you let go of the feeling of unwillingness to receive, you have more power with less exertion and greater emotional sovereignty and resilience. Consider this "If you could receive from everybody without judgment or without any point of view- what would that be like?"

Here are some examples of unconstructive situations, sentiments, viewpoints and things that may initiate unwillingness to receive for leaders

- Not wanting to deal with the crisis
- Resisting having, being, or doing something
- Fretting about how things ought to be
- Predicting the future and mind reading
- Not wanting to make mistakes

- Overestimating the chances of failure and misfortune
- Things in your life or business you don't like and want to change
- Being stuck with a problem and feeling fearful of the consequences

When you are not willing to receive, you can be certain that you are creating your reality based on your assumptions and judgement.

Judgment creates resistance which allows no choice. However, if you can remain calm and be willing to receive the undesired event without resisting or reacting, and be in allowance of yourself for disliking it, you will keep expanding your awareness and providing permission for staff to do likewise.

Resistance is a contraction of awareness; it prevents you from moving ahead in all areas of life, especially in the area of business. When you cannot receive, you will not be able to manage or deal with difficult situations because you will not be aware of its presence. For example, if you are unwilling to receive being judged by other people, you may become overly concerned with other people's points of view. You may become overly

concerned with what people think of you.

Unwilling to receive the judgment is quite insidious. It's one of the main things that stops people from having, doing, and being what they want in life.

A key step for cultivating the quality of willingness to receive everything without judgment is the willingness to claim and own the capacity to receive, even though you have no idea what that really means. A simple ingredient for being willing to receive everything is to stop resisting and reacting to any interaction of anything or anyone. When you catch yourself resisting and reacting, ask the question "What am I unwilling to receive here?", "What do I create meaningful for me that is stopping me from receiving?", "What would it be like to receive from everybody without judgment or without any point of view?"

Tool 2: Living in the question

A tool for you to expand on your business success and your reality with awareness is to live in the question. Living in the question is a most powerful tool that enables us to perceive outside a fixed and limited view of reality, beyond the limited and illusive content of thought. When you learn to live in the question rather than being besieged by the problems or become vested in finding answers and solutions, you are able to create your life more consciously. By living in the question,

you open up possibilities and are able to function from creativity.

Many, however, are caught up in living in their story. This is where people are constantly telling stories, rather than asking questions. Whenever anyone starts to tell you a story, ask them where the question is in that story. This changes the focus of the person so that they can perceive the question that will unlock more potential, rather than a litany of rights and wrongs that make the problem more dense and seemingly unsolvable. Living in the story is a limitation, so if you find yourself in the middle of telling a story, rather than asking questions, ask yourself "Where is the question in what I am saying?"

To create your reality consciously, you need to stop stating what it is, and start living in the question. When you are stating and defining the problem, you are operating out of finiteness, not infinite potential – this keeps you in the box, with no way out. This can take your freedom of choice away without you realizing it. If you are constantly living in your story, then others around you will also live in their story, and no creativity or innovation is possible. If you are living in your story, then others will not provide you with relevant information, as they will perceive you have already made up your mind.

To become conscious of what you are thinking and stating to yourself and others, you may want to take a few moments to reflect on what statements guide you through your day. What do you think or state to yourself when you awaken in the morning?when you get ready for work?when you meet with a client?when you prepare for an important meeting?when you make decisions affecting other people?when people come to you with their problems?when you are in the work environment?when you are spending time with their friends and family?when you fall asleep at night? What would it be like if, instead of making statements in these situations, you asked yourself questions?

You need to cultivate the attitude of inviting curiosity, of willingness to give up the need for being right, in order to allow the new possibilities to manifest in your business and your life. The key is to be conscious and aware of the quality of your thinking. Whenever you perceive yourself having negative and unproductive thoughts, or being besieged by problems, or vested in finding

answers and solutions, you can choose to replace them with more conscious questions. Living in the question is a process that allows you to gain access to infinite possibilities. Questions are powerful magic. A question empowers, whereas an answer most often disempowers and limits. Asking questions allows the answer to manifest by allowing the universe of potential to provide clarity. The universe has all kinds of unlimited answers that you don't have available to you because you try to function from your finite point of view of "I've got to figure it out". When you live in the question, rather than trying to figure the answer out, you allow the universe of potential to provide an answer that is greater than you can possibly determine or imagine.

Living in the question allows the conscious you to bypass your mental control, and remove judgment, rationalization and justification. However, if you state the answer is "....." instead of asking the question, you will instantly limit the possibilities and stop the unlimited answers from manifesting.

The certainty is that if you are able to function in the question instead of searching for the answer or focusing on the problem, the information you receive, and the quality of the work that your staff provide, will improve beyond measure.

Here are examples of what people often say to themselves when they deal with business issues and concerns: "This is so complicated I don't even know where to start. I can't get my head around the details.....!! I don't know how to deal with this situation....!! My job is on the line if I can't fix this problem. I've got to figure it out.....!! I don't know what to do about this problem.....!! I am so worried; I can't possibly do this.....!! etc". If your staff think "I can't do this", are they ever going to be able to do it? Instead of having these unproductive thoughts and being overwhelmed by problems, you can choose to ask the more conscious questions such as "What is it I'm not getting about this? What am I pretending not to know or denying I know about this? What would it take for this to happen? What are the infinite possibilities that this will work out much better than we could ever imagine?" "What is the question I should ask here?" These questions are exceptional tools for how to know what is the appropriate thing to do about the situation or the problem. When you ask these types of questions, things start to show up for you in a different way. The more you ask the question, the more aware you become of the options and possibilities you have. When

asking the question, it is essential to avoid having expected outcomes. The key question is, “What are the infinite possibilities in this moment?” In this way, unlimited potential and infinite possibilities will emerge in ways that you may never have imagined possible.

The questions must be asked with genuine wonder, not with attitude and certain expected outcomes. Stop seeking answers; instead put the focus on the questions themselves.

Transformation can happen through sincere questioning, because you shift from the zone of lack and limitation and scarcity to the zone of infinite possibilities. If you open up to genuine wonder, you step out of the zone of this reality and into that of infinite possibilities.

Example of Questions for use in business

- What is it going to take to get this or to create this or to have this?
- What is it going to take for this to happen?
- What is it that I won't allow the business to have that will give the business and everyone else concerned the most expansion?
- What is it going to take to make thisa total success?

Operating the business with questions can open up to possibilities of new ways of doing, working and functioning. There are substantial values lost in organisations when you do not ask simple questions. Such questions probe the essential details, cut through the hot air, clarify the nonsense, wipe out the drivel, and shed light on hidden meaning. Asking staff questions will often lead to a new perspective that you might not have envisioned

and this will also empower the staff to know that they know. Asking questions in business meetings allows people to know that they know and allows them to tap into their knowing.

Tool 3: Interesting point of view

Every point of view that you have created about anything creates the limitations and parameters from which you are able to receive information about it. Cultivating a frame of mind of “everything is an interesting point of view” will allow you to perceive beyond a fixed and limited view of reality, knowing outside the content of thought. Reality as you experience it is actually based on manufactured points of view. These manufactured points of view have either been created by you, or you have bought them from others. It is a totally malleable universe, so why do we try to function from fixed points of view?

Unconscious leaders who function based on a ‘fixed point of view’ are conformist and predictable. These leaders have fixed ideas and quite often they don't know that

they can change their point of view. Unconscious leaders with a fixed point of view often say phrases such as “Oh no, that’s not the way it is” and they focus their attention on the ‘why something can’t be done’. The regularity of the refrains: “you can’t do that” and “this is not the way we do things around here” is indicative of unconscious leaders operating with a fixed point of view. Fixed point of view boxes you in and limits the potential of your business. It limits how much you can receive. If you have a fixed point of view on anything, you automatically deny the infinite possibilities that there are better and more expansive things available.

With a fixed point of view, you cannot see anything that does not match your point of view. Others will also see this, and will only provide information they know you are willing to receive. When opportunities present themselves in ways that do not match your view, you are not be able to perceive and receive it, and often work against it or keep away from it totally. Once you have a fixed point of view, you then have created a box to self-limit what is possible, and you and others have to align and agree, or resist and

react. Therein lays much stress and misunderstanding, and the beginnings of the CEO Syndrome.

A fixed point of view often spawns the ‘right’ vs. ‘wrong’ paradigm, which creates separation and divides the organisation and the people within it. A fixed point of view often gives rise to a fixation with proving that you are right by confirming others to be wrong. Whenever you have an attachment to being right, you are usually inflicted with intolerance, antagonism and narrow-mindedness. Each time you identify with your point of view, you have to make it right and you automatically and unconsciously try to defend it against others. Holding on to a fixed point of view means that the majority of your energy is spent defending this point of view. The moment you defend anything, you are no longer free to choose. The degree to which you are functioning from a fixed point of view is in direct proportion to your inability to innovate.

Letting go of the fixed point of view

One way to approach the process of letting go of a fixed point of view is by choosing to destroy and uncreate that fixed point view.

- Identify your limiting beliefs and your fixed points of view.

- Once you've identified what your fixed points of view are, you need to catch yourself in the act of having those fixed points of view and recognize them for what they are. You can repeat to yourself "Interesting point of view I have this point of view" This will take out the attachment energy you have on the point of view and free you from it.
- Identify when staff are functioning from a fixed point of view, and raise their awareness by questioning about other possibilities. If they strongly resist and react, then they are still functioning from a fixed point of view, which can be dangerous for the business through denying other possibilities. Receive without judgement, live in the question, and treat it as just an interesting point of view. Do not buy their reality.
- Having brought your or your staff's fixed point of view into awareness, you now can choose to let it go by destroying and uncreating all of the attachments you or your staff have on it. You can also affirm that "I am choosing to destroy and uncreate all of my fixed points of view (or my judgment) about _____"

Summary

The CEO Syndrome is pervasive in many businesses, and has been a major cause of many corporate collapses, including some of the most recent. The environment that creates the CEO Syndrome is a choice made by the organisational leaders about whether they choose to be conscious, unconscious or anticonscious. You have that choice also. Choose.



What is LifeMastery?

LifeMastery is an international practice dedicated to facilitating individual and organisational transformation through expansion of consciousness in the workplace so that consciousness can spread throughout society and transform the world.

We empower CEO's, Boards and Organisations to cultivate and expand consciousness capabilities that in turn increase accountability, strategic position, and the power to choose and implement the future they want.

We facilitate magnification of consciousness in governance and empowering directorship of the boards of commercial, public and Not for Profit organisations. We support Chief Executives and their teams to develop conscious and mindful partnerships with their boards.

We work globally with

- Individual Chief Executives
- Individual Chairs
- Individual Directors
- Boards of Directors

We work initially with the CEO and/or the Board to develop the skills and tools necessary to further develop a culture of consciousness within the organisation. These skills and tools include conscious governance, creative executive leadership and embedded strategic thinking processes.

In addition to consulting engagements, we also provide keynote presentations and workshops at conferences and in-house business meetings, conduct public seminars and publish articles and e-books. Our objective is to support organisations who want to grow individual and group consciousness.

Contact [Steve Bowman](#) (61 3 9509 9529) for a proposal or quote on providing expert services in these areas, or visit our website on www.lifemastery.com.au for more details.

- Customised Board Enhancement Workshops
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- Risk Management Planning Facilitation
- CEO mentoring
- Conscious Leadership



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