Four steps to practicing Radical Candor at work

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by zendesk

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Radical Candor will make you a better leader, but it will also make you a better colleague. Everyone can work on "challenging directly" and "caring personally," though it does take some practice. Here are some things you can do to practice and encourage Radical Candor within your organization.

① Give candor

Your feedback should mean, "I want to help." While intention is important, so is timing, so give feedback immediately while it's fresh and relevant. As a rule, give negative feedback privately and give praise publicly (so long as people are okay with being praised publicly). Either way, both negative feedback and praise should be specific.

② Get candor

As a manager, think about how can you encourage candor from your team. Russ Laraway from Candor Inc. recommends having a go-to question to help solicit honest feedback. For example, "Is there something I can do differently here?" Then, he says, shut up. Count for eight seconds (long enough for some awkward silence) and listen with the intent to understand.

③ Encourage candor

Don't intervene in interpersonal conflicts between team members. It's a roadblock. You might feel like you're listening and empathizing, but listening to someone vent means you're hearing only one side of the truth. That stirs the pot. The best thing to do is to shut it down and encourage your colleagues to handle their issue directly. If they can't, encourage them to come back and escalate their issue together.

④ Gauge candor

"The first step toward change is awareness," Laraway says. Take the pulse on your management style by trying "The Candor Gauge." It can be as simple as drawing the axis on a whiteboard and putting a Post-it note where you think your behavior falls. The key is to ask your team where you're showing up. It's uncomfortable, sure, but here's the unflappable truth: whatever your team says is right.