"What builds great and sustainable organizations are leaders with a high degree of business acumen – specific skills, planning and control – and Emotional Intelligence – methods to keep people motivated and engaged. Leaders who have a sensitivity to relationships and do a good job of building relationships have something beyond business skills that help organizations succeed. They have highly developed, emotionally-intelligent behaviors."

~Roger Pearman, Founder and CEO of Leadership Performance Systems.
Re-Wire Your Brain for Success

We now know more than ever how our brains work, at times for- and sometimes against us, and what role the anatomy of our nervous system plays in our day to day interactions. A study by J. David Creswell at Carnegie Mellon University used fMRI (high resolution brain scans) to show that by simply labeling an emotion, it increases our ability to better regulate those emotions as they are experienced. With this in mind, the following is an exercise to increase the ability to recognize and label emotions, especially when the stakes are high.

You’ve Been Triggered!

1. Generate as long of a list as possible of all the things that get you fired up, annoyed, angry, or otherwise emotional. What kinds of things drive you nuts?

2. Now that you’ve identified some of your triggers, next to each one listed above write in the emotion that is associated with the trigger (i.e., anger, sadness, surprise, fear, disgust, etc.).

3. How does your body react during times that you have been triggered? (Heart pounding, shaking, sweating, retreat inward and become quiet, become more verbal and loud, etc.) These are clues and warning signs that you can use in the future to prepare you for a more emotionally intelligent response.

4. Are there times that it is predictable that you will react strongly? (Certain meetings, time of the day, week, month, year, while driving, dealing with in-laws, upset customers, etc.) Awareness of patterns can help to predict responses that may otherwise catch you off guard.

5. Now choose the ideal form of response that you would like to see yourself doing instead of the negative response. Try to be as detailed as possible and also include the emotional state you would prefer to be in while dealing with the stressful situation.
Inclusion and Brain Based Behavior

When considering the numerous approaches to improving communication, we are now at a crossroads of ageless wisdom and philosophy intersecting with advanced and innovative neuroscience. One group that is devoted to mixing these two worlds of business and brain science is the NeuroLeadership Institute (NLI).

The NeuroLeadership Institute is a leading global research organization and the pioneer of bringing neuroscience to leadership. Since its inception the Institute has united the world’s foremost neuroscientists, leadership researchers, and organizational practitioners with the purpose of transforming how we think, develop, and perform. (www.neuroleadership.com)

The founder of the institute David Rock summarized a large part of the institute’s premise by stating that the brain is physically set up to minimize threat and maximize reward. As obvious as this sounds, examining what happens in the brain when we feel our defensiveness triggered and the resulting stress response, it can be proven time and time again in our social interactions and helps to make sense of miscommunications.

The NLI identified several domains of social experience that draw on the same brain networks to maximize reward and minimize threat as the brains networks used for primary survival needs. “In other words, social needs are treated in much the same way in the brain as the need for food and water.” The approach they use to describe these behavioral drivers has been named the S.C.A.R.F. Model®, which stands for Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness.

Let us look at Inclusion through the lens of the S.C.A.R.F. model and some ways the threat/reward response may be triggered.

**Status** - Relevant importance to others. “Am I respected & valued?”
Threat: No personal contact, treating them like one in a crowd or an object.
Reward: Greeting by name, acknowledging a recent effort or accomplishment.

**Certainty** – Our ability to predict the future. “Am I in the loop & included?”
Threat: Due to budget constraints, all ideas are on the table to cut costs.
Reward: We would like to hear your ideas for cutting costs to help address the budget constraints.

**Autonomy** – Provides a sense of control over events.
Threat: I need you to document your work time in 15 minute increments and provide justification for that allocation of time spent.
Reward: What process do you use for keeping track of your time? Can I share with you what I need on my end and why?

**Relatedness** – A sense of safety with others, friend rather than foe.
Threat: Gossip, cliques, jokes at the expense of others, bullying, favoritism
Reward: “Same team” mentality, appreciation, offering to help, empathy

**Fairness** – A perception of fair exchanges between people.
Threat: No explanation of process or decision rationale; biases & prejudices
Reward: Transparency, conversation about perceived biases & prejudices
Organizational and Cultural Impacts

Efforts towards improving communication are often at the forefront of many leadership development programs. By utilizing information from research in emotional intelligence, neuroscience and human behavior, organizations can provide a structured approach for communication improvement. Many business outcomes can be impacted including:

- Individual Performance
- Employee Engagement
- Organizational Climate
- Retention/Turnover

- Teamwork
- Stress Management
- Sales
- Customer Service

Research from the Center for Creative Leadership (www.ccl.org) found the primary causes of derailment in executives involve low Emotional Intelligence, specifically difficulty handling change, poor teamwork and interpersonal relationships. These derailments can impact business outcomes as well as aspects of organizational culture including Authenticity, Coaching, Insight and Innovation.

Well-Being at Work

Shawn Achor, a leader in the Positive Psychology movement and author of The Happiness Advantage, makes a compelling case that the greatest advantage in today's economy is a happy and engaged workforce. In his book and blog he highlights research over the past decade that proves happiness raises nearly every business and educational outcome: increasing sales by 37%, productivity by 31%, and accuracy on tasks by 19%.

In a landmark meta-study of over 200 studies conducted on 275,000 people worldwide, positive psychologists Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King and Ed Diener, found that happiness leads to success in nearly every life domain, including work performance, health, longevity, relationships, sociability, creativity and energy.

This point is critical. Happiness is a prerequisite for success, not simply a happy by product.

Mr. Achor posits that we can wire our brains for increased positivity and happiness by doing these things for just 2 minutes a day, for 21 days.

1) Every day, name or write down 3 new things you are grateful for.
2) Every day, reflect and write a paragraph about just one positive thing that has happened in the last 24-hours.
3) Exercise.
4) Meditate: this helps us recover from today’s culture of multi-tasking by practicing focusing.
5) Perform random (or conscious) acts of kindness.