Workplace Wisdom

For

9 To Thrive

*Proven tactics and hacks
to get ahead in today's workplace*

Nina Sunday

This book is dedicated to all my friends and fellow authors at Professional Speakers Australia who inspire me to write.

Other works by
Nina Sunday

Brainpower Smart Study:

How To Study Effectively	Book	ISBN 978 0 9751941 5 7
Time Management	eBook	ASIN B00DE2X34Q
Speed Reading training	Video	ISBN 978 0 9751941 0 2
Super Memory training	Video	ISBN 978 0 9751941 1 9
Customer Service training	Video	ISBN 978 0 9751941 2 6
Time Management training	Video	ISBN 978 0 9751941 3 3
Business Writing training	Video	ISBN 978 0 9751941 4 0

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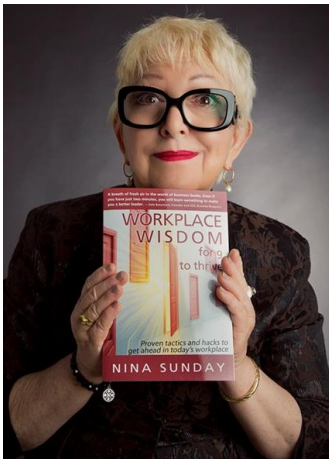
- Nina Sunday, speaker, facilitator, author on workplace know-how
- 1990, founded Brainpower Training
- pioneered Speed Reading and Memory training Australia-wide
- Won *Innovation in Learning* award from the Australian Institute of Training and Development
- Authored five training videos on workplace know-how
- Member: Mensa Australia
- Past State President and board member Professional Speakers Australia

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INTRODUCTION

Predictions around disruption to the world of work declare there is a new work order. Young people today may have 17 jobs in five different careers. Portfolio careers are on the rise i.e. not one job, one employer, but multiple jobs and employers, perhaps over more than one profession.

In a tech world, it's high social skills that help you stand out and get ahead. The best managers are outstanding communicators who know how to lead a team, collaborate with a diverse range of people and able to influence peers and customers to take action. They know it's not what you say but how you say it that makes the difference. Word choice and how we use language impacts the way we persuade others. In the age of disruption, being adept at human interaction is rewarded with higher wages.

Being average at your job is over. Not being interdisciplinary can harm your career. To thrive in a rapidly changing world, managers and teams need to continuously improve all aspects of their workplace know-how: the art of communication and influence, productivity, sales and service, leading people and creating a conscious and transparent workplace culture.

To future-proof your employability in a VUCA world, (short for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous), constant reinvention is the key to keeping up, evolving and staying relevant. Your job IS change. It's up to you to stay change agile and continuously grow and reboot your brain. I trust this book will help you achieve the getting of workplace wisdom.

How to use this book

For managers

Each chapter is a stand-alone piece of micro-learning. Copy a chapter to distribute to your team and invite them to read before the next team meeting. You'll find a list of trigger questions in the article *How to Brainstorm* within the *Stay Curious* section, such as:

- What can we **start** doing?

- What can we **stop** doing?
- What can we do **more of**?
- What can we do **less of**?
- What can we **improve**?

And when you've captured in writing a wish-list of next actions, then rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D according to its priority, for example:

A. low effort, high payoff – do first
B. low effort, low payoff – do next
C. high effort, high payoff – just get started with the first action-step
D. high effort, low payoff – don't bother

For individual contributors

Show this book to your manager and volunteer to copy a chapter to send around, with your manager's blessing, to team members with the invitation to read then participate in an ideas discussion at the next team meeting.

You might like to suggest your manager leads that discussion, or if they decline, offer to do so yourself. At the meeting, use the trigger questions and record each suggestion in writing as they come up. Allocate a specific time. After idea generation, go back to quickly rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D priority.

By you taking the initiative this way, (where there's a positive workplace culture), it will likely identify you as a high-potential team member destined for leadership. (However, if this suggestion is not well-received, ask yourself what can be done to make the culture more conducive to growth and learning; or was it perhaps the manner in which you suggested you take the initiative?)
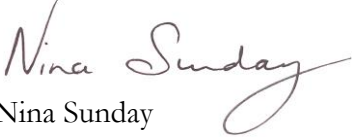
Always be reading

To grow your workplace wisdom read a non-fiction book (digital or print or listen to an audiobook) at least 10 minutes a day. Read at least one book a month, 12 books a year. See the article Read Your Way to the Top in the

Gather Wisdom section of this book for reasons to read every day. Leaders are readers. Be a reader.

Feel free to stay in touch by visiting the contact page at www.brain powertraining.com.au and sharing your thoughts.

The way we did business five years ago can't be the way we do business in the next five. Constant reinvention is the key.

Nina Sunday

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Lead from the front

Workplace culture is hiding in plain sight.
Is yours toxic or flourishing?

PEOPLE DON'T QUIT COMPANIES, THEY QUIT MANAGERS

Leadership is more a learned skill than an innate talent, and many managers don't know what they don't know about inspiring and leading people.

When a new hire joins a company, their expectations are high. But a common reason they leave is not the organisation; it's their immediate manager. According to Wilson Learning research on employee engagement, happiness at work flows from the leadership skills of managers.

'If managers fail to create job satisfaction within their teams, people feel unmotivated and negative,' says Michael Leimbach, Vice-President of Research and Development, Wilson Learning Worldwide[1]. Managers have the power to create a team that is totally engaged or they can stifle work fulfillment and drive people to leave their jobs'.

There's an even higher correlation between how managers lead and employee satisfaction. The research listed leadership behaviours making the greatest contribution to employee fulfillment. Recognition, feedback and support were identified. Giving direction and setting goals were also high on the list for creating staff engagement.

There's a connection between business results, leadership behaviours and employee fulfillment which impacts competitiveness and profitability. How managers interact with their team on a day-to-day basis is now recognised as a key driver of business performance.

Managers with high emotional intelligence and effective leadership practices create high level fulfilment in their people and keep good staff. This has a direct impact on the bottom line.

According to a report by Aon Hewitt[2], 4 out of 10 employees worldwide are still not engaged. This report links employee satisfaction with performance. Employee engagement is a leading indicator of company growth. Companies that manage higher employee engagement even during an economic downturn, see dramatic, positive impacts to their revenue growth.

BEWARE THE SIGMOID CURVE: HOW TO LEAD FROM THE FRONT

A team leader needs to lead from the front by regularly scheduling a learning meeting most mornings (or start of shift). By asking individuals to discuss and share what's working for them, you set up a collaborative learning atmosphere.

Win Their Hearts And Minds

Leadership is about winning your people's hearts and minds. And it's done by interacting with them face on, tools-down, in a focused and considered way, not barking orders while walking past.

Why is this important?

Answer: The Sigmoid Curve

Charles Handy described the sigmoid curve as an s-shaped curve that corresponds to every human system[3]. The first phase is experimentation and learning, the second period is doing the job, performing well. But ultimately every curve turns downward. The way to curb the downward spiral is to start a fresh, upward curve before the downward direction has gone too far.

The attitude of a team member resembles the s-curve of a sigmoid curve. When they first come on board they are keen, enthusiastic, wanting to do well. But if left alone to just 'do the job', they peak, and effort starts to turn south. Leading from the front starts a fresh sigmoid curve, keeping people enthused.

Taking sales as an example, let's say the typical life cycle of a salesperson in a role is three years. The first year they are learning how to do the job competently. You, as their manager, have their respect. The second year they do the job, you may feel they don't need as much of your input, so you might leave them alone.

If left alone to just 'do the job', third year's performance and attitude may drop exponentially. They either leave, or if they stay on, become actively disengaged. This poor mindset affects not only their own

performance, but also others in the team. A manager can prevent a negative spiral downwards by leading from the front, daily. (In some teams, if the leader abdicates leadership, the sigmoid curve might be over three months instead of three years.)

Shalom in the Home was an American reality television series hosted by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach[4]. Over two successful television seasons he helped families overcome problems with communication, marriage and parenting. After installing CCTV into a home, Shmuley would camp outside in a caravan and view family interactions in real time. Subsequently he would give feedback on how parents were interacting with their children, and how spouses were relating with each other. It was a fascinating journey into emotional intelligence.

On one episode, a mother, with head buried in the fridge, barked orders to her children as they walked past. Shmuley showed her how being pre-occupied with fishing items out of the fridge detracted from the message she was attempting to send. Shmuley taught her to stop, focus, and issue specific instructions in a directed, face-the-front way. Changing her approach led to increased respect and compliance.

Action

When and how do you talk to your team? Are you leading from the front?

WANT CHANGE? GO TO YOUR PEOPLE WITH QUESTIONS

Here's The Scenario.

Your organisation announces at a meeting an impending change and asks, 'Are there any questions?' Then dead silence. On everyone's minds might be, 'Why are we making this change?' But fear of being branded a troublemaker keeps their lips sealed.

Management is often threatened by tough questions such as, 'Why should we change? Is this the only solution?'

Change management is not so much about overcoming resistance. It's more about your team accepting a different approach is necessary and asking them how to initiate the change. You are not asking your people to 'buy-in' to a solution, you are empowering them to use their brainpower to come up with one.

Do Not Go To People With Answers. Go To Them With Questions.

Why don't managers do more of this?

It takes time. Management can often provide a solution more quickly than it takes to discuss the problem and possible solutions.

Emile Chartier wrote, 'Nothing is more dangerous than a good idea, when it is the only idea we have.'[5]

Always Look For The Second Right Answer

Your first response might be knee-jerk.

By going to your team with the challenge, you access innovation and creativity and possible elegant solutions that emerge from exploring root causes of the problem. As well, your people feel as if they are trusted to come up with an answer; that their opinion has value.

Action

Start with the problem. Tell them your whole thought process. It takes more time, but it works.

WHAT ARE THE 8 GOOD BEHAVIOURS OF MANAGERS?

During early days of the Google company, managers were scarce. It was a flat structure; most staff were engineers and technical experts. In fact, in 2002 a few hundred engineers reported to only four managers.

But over time — and out of necessity — the number of managers increased. Then in 2009, the People and Culture team at Google noticed a disturbing trend. Exit-interview data cited low satisfaction with their manager as a reason for leaving Google. And because Google has access to so much data online they asked their statisticians to analyse and identify top attributes of a good manager.

Creating A Coaching Culture

Google's now famous Project Oxygen started in 2009 as 'the manager project'. The PiLab (People and Innovation Lab) Team researched questions such as:

- How do managers impact team performance?
- Do managers matter?
- How can we create amazing managers, not just competent ones?

Data-Driven

The Google method is always data-driven. PiLab reviewed exit surveys to find out if low satisfaction with a manager was a reason for leaving the company. And conversely, did satisfaction with one's manager correlate with staff staying?

At the time, Google engineers preferred to decode and debug. Talking to direct reports was considered not part of their job; something that got in the way of getting their 'real' work done.

Google surveys already rated managers' performance, from high (top 25%) to low (lowest 25%).

PiLab's research discovered that Googlers (Google staff) on teams of high-scoring managers were not only happier, with higher job satisfaction and retention, but also achieved higher performance and higher scores on innovation, work-life balance and career development.

How Do Best Managers Behave?

Next phase of research asked questions such as:

- How often do you discuss career development with direct reports?
- How do you develop a vision for your team?

Comments in the annual Google Great Manager Award nominations were analysed, as well as thousands of surveys and performance reviews.

Eight Good Behaviours

A set of eight good behaviours common among high-scoring managers were identified.

1. A good manager is a good coach.
2. Empowers the team and does not micro manage.
3. Expresses interest / concern for team members' success and personal well-being.
4. Is productive and results oriented.
5. Is a good communicator; listens and shares information.
6. Helps with career development.
7. Has a clear vision/strategy for the team.
8. Technical skills to help or advise the team.

Be A Coach

What's significant is not just the list of attributes but order of importance. Top of the list is, *A good manager is a good coach*. Last, attribute number eight, is *Technical skills to help or advise the team.*

To upskill managers in these effective behaviours, the Project Oxygen team taught these behaviours in leadership training programs to their managers, and in coaching and performance review sessions with individuals. They redesigned their annual Upward Feedback Survey (UFS) to focus specifically on the eight attributes of great managers.

To gain 'buy-in' from managers across the company, the Project Oxygen team shared the findings and the Action Plan with company-wide presentations to all levels of the organisation — to junior and mid-level managers as well as to Senior Executives. To help managers improve, they described not only the list of attributes but also best practices.

By November 2012, a comprehensive leadership development program of communication and training was in place, cultivating these key management behaviours. Subsequently Google experienced statistically significant improvements in managerial effectiveness and performance.

Upward Feedback Survey

The first Upward Feedback Survey (UFS) listed behaviour statements:

- My manager regularly gives me positive feedback.
- My manager is quick to grant credit to team members for their work.
- My manager does not micro-manage.
- My manager had a meaningful discussion with me about my career development in the past six months.
- My manager communicates clear goals for our team.

'Strongly agree' — 'agree' — 'neutral' — 'disagree' — 'strongly disagree' were possible answers.

The UFS was sent out June 2010 to managers only with more than three direct reports. A few weeks later these managers received an online report with scores including percentage of favourable response for each question, plus comments.

This process kick-started Google's passion in management development, including:

- giving and receiving feedback
- building a vision for your team
- managing change
- identifying a team's core strengths, etc.

Eric Clayberg, a Google software engineering manager, commented, 'I had been managing teams for 18 years. I learned more about managing in six months than I had learned in the previous two decades.'[6]

A comparison of UFS scores from 2010 — 2012 indicated median scores rose by 5%, from 83% favourable, to 88%.

A Google People Analytics manager, Welle, commented, 'We've seen the least effective managers improve the most over time.'[6]

A newly arrived Sales Director managing a global team of 150 people and meeting sales targets, found that his first UFS score, when it arrived, was a real shock. He was surprised to discover that at Google his job was not just about hitting targets. It's also about how he communicates with his team and keeps them focused on long-term strategy. With an action plan and targeted training, that Sales Director was able, over time, to raise his UFS score from 46% to 86%.

Teams

Prasad Setty, Google's Director of People Analytics, progressed to studying teams, looking at questions such as:

- Can whole teams become more productive?
- How much diversity is just right?
- What's the right combination of people who worked well together in the past vs adding new people?
- What else drives people to go from good to great?
- Can we identify preferred personality traits?

People Don't Quit Companies, They Quit Managers.

Larry Page, co-founder of Google, said, 'We should be growing the leaders that the world needs.'[6]

Action

We should all seek to find an answer to the question of how to create truly amazing managers.

REFERENCES

The quotes, anecdotes and ideas described in this book were accumulated from a variety of sources over a number of years. While we've made every attempt to fully attribute the origin of each of these items, the author may have been unable to list some sources in the detail preferred.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nina Sunday is an international speaker, educator and author. Professional Speakers Australia awarded her CSP designation (Certified Speaking Professional), held by only 12% of professional speakers worldwide.

After working in education, the performing arts, sales and television, Nina founded Australian training company, Brainpower Training, and over two decades grew a network of Facilitators delivering business skills to Top 500 companies, SMEs (small-medium enterprises) and government.

After a decade niching in Speed Reading and Memory, she spent the next 17 years developing and delivering programs in Productivity, Communication, Presentation Skills, Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Change and Sales. Nina Sunday is the Workplace Maven, empowering managers and teams sharpen their workplace know-how for different thinking, better results.

Qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma in Education, plus graduating in Direction and Production Management from the three-year program of the Australian Film, TV and Radio School.

After more than three decades based in Sydney, Nina recently relocated to discover a new-found love of her hometown of Brisbane in Queensland, Australia.