



Guttman
Insights

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Announcing the Guttman Leadership Institute

We want our readers to be among the first to know about the exciting news from Guttman: The launch of the new Guttman Leadership Institute.

The institute is devoted exclusively to leadership—*your* leadership. It provides a fresh perspective and proven set of processes and capabilities for improving how senior leaders think and perform. A unique feature of the institute is the single focus on senior leaders: C-suite executives, vice presidents and directors, and senior managers preparing to assume expanded accountability. Our aim is to accelerate their ability to lead in any organization, regardless of structure or size.

The institute is powered by the expertise of its allied company, Guttman Development Strategies, with its quarter-century of experience aligning teams, coaching executives, and developing leadership capabilities. As we listened to senior executives from many different organizations, time and again we heard them voice concern about how they and the next generation of leaders can be better prepared for the new set of leadership challenges facing 21st-century organizations.

There is a growing leadership capability gap that must be filled for leaders and their organizations to remain competitive.

In this issue, we introduce you to the just-launched Guttman Leadership Institute for senior leaders. The institute helps senior leaders hone their capabilities by participating in intensive learning opportunities, either within their companies or at our new Leadership Development Center in Mt. Arlington, NJ. And in this issue, Howard Guttman trains his sights on “conscious victims,” a potentially disruptive force that often lies in wait in many organizations. Atlantic Health Systems’ Kathleen Mason and Guttman’s Cindy Herman team up to discuss building leadership capabilities for front-line coordinators. All this in a five-minute read.

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The Guttman Leadership Institute



Announcing the Guttman Leadership Institute

We are launching the Guttman Leadership Institute to fill that leadership gap. The institute meets senior leaders and their teams where they are most likely to gain maximum benefit. We offer both open-enrollment and in-company learning opportunities.

Open-Enrollment Leadership Development

If you feel that you would gain optimum value by attending open-enrollment sessions with leaders from other companies, we have created an outstanding learning environment to meet your needs. Join us at our state-of-the-art, “green” Leadership Development Center in Mt. Arlington, NJ.

Corporate Leadership Development

Working within organizations enables us to help expand the collective leadership capability of the entire organization. Depending on need, we can deliver programs to individual leaders and their teams at a variety of touch points, including:

- “open” in-company seminars
- corporate universities
- intact teams, such as senior business, cross-functional, product/market, and project teams

Our curriculum provides the full range of leadership capabilities needed for 21st-century leadership: strategic decision making, team leadership, conflict management, influencing, change management, emotional intelligence, negotiation, and many others.

Learning formats can vary from conventionally run programs to blended learning and virtual experiences. Beyond innovative programs and approaches, we are staffed by seasoned leadership consultants and facilitators with years of experience at top levels.

The institute is a woman-owned business that will also be offering innovative development opportunities for senior-level women seeking to realize their full leadership potential.

Learn at the Guttman Leadership Institute, and lead anywhere.

To learn more about the institute’s approaches, please contact us at 855-755-3700 and be sure to visit our Website: www.guttmanleadershipinstitute.com



Conscious Victims: Who Are They and Can They Be Fixed?

by Howard M. Guttman

By the time Laura L.'s serial underperformance was discovered, it was too late. Clients at a Princeton-based consulting firm had first began to mumble to themselves and then to Laura, but when Laura continued to miss important client meetings and not show up fully prepared and on point for a number of engagements, clients took their unhappiness to the practice leader. When questioned by him, Laura explained that she had been dogged by recent bad luck: a divorce, medical issues, and aging parents. "I was boxed in by circumstance," was her justification.

When the practice leader asked her why she hadn't come to him sooner to discuss client unhappiness, she said that she had been fearful that the president of the firm, reputed to be intolerant of imperfection, would catch wind of the situation and severely discipline and possibly even terminate her. "I've never been comfortable with confrontation." Laura expressed great regret for her poor performance and lack of transparency, expressed commitment to her clients and company, and vowed to change immediately.

Laura's practice leader was a man of great empathy. While expressing dissatisfaction with her behavior, he moved into damage-control mode by assigning other consultants to the offended clients and told Laura that he had decided to "keep this between us." He warned her that further problems would not be tolerated and sent her back into the fray.

Not surprisingly, six months later another major client complained to the practice leader about Laura's performance. The situation was strikingly similar to the previous one, with client complaints about her performance and Laura's attempt to hide out by not disclosing the problem. This time, the practice leader was less sympathetic, and Laura was terminated.

I call the Lauras of organizational life "conscious victims." Unfortunately, they are in oversupply and are capable of doing serious damage to their organizations. Like the garden variety of those who favor playing victim, there is a woe-is-me component to conscious victims. They blame their plight on circumstances beyond their control, be they other people, places, or things. In Popeye talk, "I yam what I yam." Since they believe that they are at the effect of problems and not their cause, how can conscious victims be held accountable?

"When you are dealing with a conscious victim, the real challenge is to break the cycle that traps such people and those around them."

Such a belief makes it easier for conscious victims to justify not being transparent and fingering others instead of taking responsibility for their situation. In Laura's case, her "story" was that the firm's president was too hardnosed to approach openly. She shifted the onus of responsibility to someone else, which justified her hiding out, hoping she could bury client complaints by not discussing them up front with her supervisor.

Unlike many who play victim, conscious victims are aware and even admit that

their behavior is potentially harmful and disempowering. Even so, they choose not to shift. They believe they are scoring points by merely acknowledging what they are doing, versus doing something about it. In their mind, this somehow absolves them from being accountable. It's a cool trick, if you can get away with it. And conscious victims often do.

Conscious victims tend to beat themselves up. When they get caught, they express regret and dissatisfaction with themselves. Sometimes the regret is even couched in some higher purpose, as was the case with one executive who rationalized his inability to meet deadlines by claiming he was unable to say "no" to customer requests. "It's not in my make-up not to help."

Conscious victims frequently reach out to enroll others in their “racket,” as Laura did with the practice leader. Most often, they look to colleagues, coaxing them to be sympathetic to their plight. It’s the wounded-puppy syndrome, and colleagues who offer protection aren’t helping. Holding someone “small” doesn’t encourage him or her to accept accountability, learn, and grow.

How can you tell that a conscious victim lurks on your team or in a cubicle near you? Look for any combination of these behaviors:

Artful dodger—It’s not about me. It’s about you, the organization, personal circumstance, etc., etc.

Doesn’t deliver—Promises to change, but never does

Hides out—“I’ll lay low and fly below the radar.” They play an underground game.

Self-justifies—Offers reasons why, stories, and excuses

Great pretender—“I always have the good of the company at heart, but I have this one blind spot.”

Is defensive—Views feedback as feedattack and is programmed to give “Yes, but…” responses, justifications, and feel the need to constantly explain.

Enrolls others—Reaches out to others to gain the support, sympathy, and even cover for dysfunctional behavior

While it’s important to recognize when you are dealing with a conscious victim, the real challenge is to break the cycle that traps such people and those around them: underperforming, hiding out, offering stories and excuses when discovered, making promises, never shifting behavior, continued underperformance—and the cycle continues. The key is to carefully probe the back story: What’s their story about why they choose a certain behavior? How does that story benefit them, and what payoff do they get from holding onto it? What are the adverse consequences of doing the same? Ultimately, unless someone truly gets why they choose to stay stuck in an unproductive pattern of behavior, nothing will change.

Behavior change begins with awareness. If you sense that a peer is a conscious victim— colleagues are often the first to discover a racketeer—be a coach rather than a friend or a censor. It’s about helping the person to become intentional: supporting his or her creation of a powerful intention, a self-empowering story and new pattern of behavior. Probe the existing story. Contract with the person about what needs to change and how you will support the effort. Jointly lay out a plan and hold him or her to it. Check in periodically.

Become a safe haven, so you are kept abreast of progress. Be at stake for your colleague becoming functional, but never collude. And never let the person off the hook.

There’s no quick fix here, but there’s real power when peers hold peers accountable. It just might turn conscious victims into conscious players and high performers. 🌱

Recent Articles

Recent Articles

Howard M. Guttman
“Building Horizontal, High-Performance Global Teams”
MWorld
Fall 2013

This article features the impressive results that Todd Lachman and his team at Mars, Inc.’s Petcare business have achieved. The lessons they learned along the way can be applied by global teams everywhere.



From a Consultant's Notebook

Cindy Herman

Here are the field notes from an intervention led by Guttman Associate Senior Consultant Cindy Herman and Guttman client, Kathleen Mason, manager, organization development, Atlantic Health System. Atlantic Health System, which includes Morristown Medical Center, Overlook Medical Center in Summit, Newton Medical Center and Goryeb Children's Hospital, is a leading health care provider in the New Jersey and New York metropolitan area. We appreciate Kathy's willingness to go on record sharing her experience with our readers.

Presenting Situation

Atlantic Health System's 540 coordinators play a pivotal role as points of interaction, juggling many roles on the front lines of its four hospitals and managing and supporting staff who directly touch patients and their families...Roles becoming more complex...Conflict management, influencing, issue resolution, communication, problem solving...all needed to boost leadership skills and decrease stress...Also needed: stronger co-accountability and collaboration within coordinators' teams and across hospital units.

Charter for Guttman

Accelerate the effectiveness of the coordinators through a results-based skills transfer and development effort...Program must be tailored to live issues and real situations, application, idea exchange with peers, high take-home value, including practical tools to be put to use right away... Focus on creating a support system among participants to continue the learning after returning to the workplace. Specific skills to be transferred: influencing, conflict management, developing high-performing leaders, team leadership and development, and coaching for performance.

Process

Integrated approach to capabilities development. Focus on up-front needs assessment and on-going involvement of coordinators' managers, including one-on-one "talent talks" and focus groups, then data analysis...Cross-section of high-potential, best and brightest coordinators selected from several hospitals and healthcare facilities... Series of five one-day programs developed; one delivered each month...Combination of facilitator-led skills transfer and coaching, along with peer learning...

Managers briefed before each program and responsibilities outlined... During each session, learning partners selected for post-workshop support and coaching...Evaluations conducted throughout the entire program, including written and live feedback gathered at the end of the series... Refresher session held four to five months following the final program...Structured follow-up with managers and participants to ensure learning integrated into on-the-job performance.

Results

Feedback from coordinators and managers very positive... Coordinators report gaining new skills and getting results, especially given the live issue focus of the program... Able to immediately apply the tools and skills acquired to resolve workplace issues...No longer avoiding difficult conversations...Collaboration increased and teams more accountable...Better able to proactively face issues...Barriers broken across different hospitals...Managers report high levels of enthusiasm and engagement among coordinators who attended the program...Want other Coordinators to go through the process.

Key Insights

Standard "turnstile training" approaches aren't effective... To get lasting results, involve the managers every step of the way...Make the development experience real...Build in live situations and issues...Focus on application and practical tools...The modular approach works well, especially if you support participant/manager conversations and a peer-support system...Make the learning an ongoing process, not a one-program event. ●