Radical Candour

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Short Summary

For my full notes on this book, go to the [External Insight Folder](#) and the file called 'Radical Candour'.

Below are the top 3 key points from the book.

1. **Initially got a bad wrap and was used by managers to give them permission to be awful -** The book talks about how it initially got a bad wrap and was used by managers as permission to be awful to their people. The author then had to write an introduction and a closing chapter to explain that Radical Candour isn't about verbally bashing anyone…. it's about Caring Personally an Challenging Directly. With strong focus on caring personally.

2. **The book talks about relationships, feedback, team management and results -** The book has four chapters which talk about the main functions of management including (1) Building 'radically candid' relationships, (2) Get, give and encourage guidance…. which is about feedback. (2) Understand what motivates each person on your team…. which is team management and (3) Drive results collaboratively…. by leveraging the team. I don't think I read anything in here that was revolutionary. I'd say that the whole book could be summed up by two points which are (a) Practice proper management and (b) do what needs to be done and protect relationship as you do it.

3. **Why this book might be helpful in a British organisation -** I worked at a British organisation that had around 6 CIOs and they are all British. One of the CIOs told me that the 6 CIOs went into a meeting together and initially all disagreed. They progressed the meeting and all got to a point of agreement. They all then left the meeting and went back to their disagreeing points of views which they executed on! I had a British transformation lead tell me that this happened a lot to her and she found it very frustrating. She therefore used to use the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model (below) to try and help folks collaborate in the best way. I personally think this model is more useful than 'Radical Candour' but … maybe I'm not reading it right.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model

That's pretty much all I have to say about this book.

If you've read the book and found it to be super insightful and helpful, please let me know what you liked about it as I think I'm missing something.
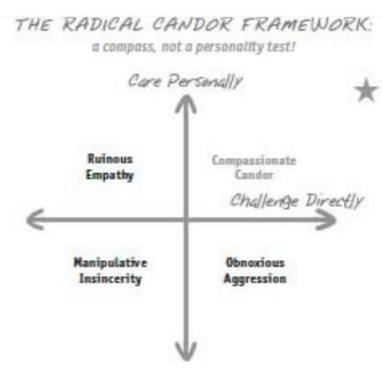
Detailed Summary

Contents

Preface

- When radical candour landed it wasn't received too well. It was used by leaders as an excuse to be rude and direct to their colleagues.

- The author therefore underlined what radical candour is and what it is not. Radical candour is about caring personally and challenging directly to result in compassionate candour.


Introduction

- The author worked at Google with Sheryl Sandberg and Larry Page.
  a. Larry used to encourage debate including encouraging challenging him himself.
  b. Google was described as a bottom up company as young and junior employees drive decision making.
- She references a class Apple created called 'managing at apple'.

a. She learnt from apple that you need rockstars and superstars in your team. Rock stars on a steady trajectory and doing well where they are and superstars who are getting promoted regularly.
b. Apple also is famous for hiring people who tell _us_ what to do not the other way around.

- Success of organisations and individuals is down to relationships and the author says that the best way to nurture the best relationships is with radical candour.

New management philosophy
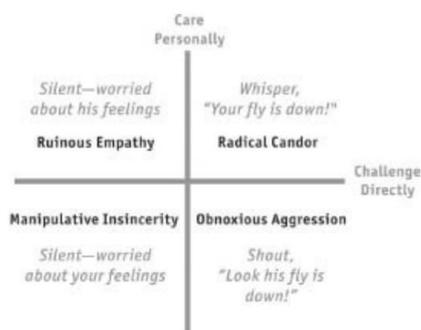
Build radically candid relationships

- **It's called management and it's your job -** The author talks about one of her early roles where she was inundated with personal people issues. Her view was that this was not her job as leader to look after personal people issues. She was corrected and came to understand that all people issues are the responsibility of a manager.
- **How to be a good boss –** Guide the team, offer team building, get results
- **Relationships not power drive you forward** – Your relationships with your directs impact the relationships your directs have with their directs. Your ability to build trusting human connections with the people who report directly to you will determine the quality of everything that follows.
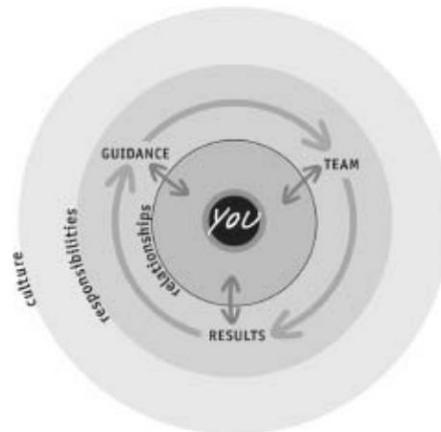
- **Radical candour** – Is about caring personally and challenging directly. If this is done, your team will (1) accept and act on your praise and criticism, (2), tell you what they really think about you and what you're doing well and not so well, (3) engage in this same behaviour with one another, (4) embrace their role on the team and (5) focus on getting results.
- **Caring personally** – Is about caring about the whole person with your whole self. Understanding aspirations, getting to know each other at a human level, finding what's important, finding out what turns people off.
- **Challenge directly** -Shows that (1) you care enough to point out both the things that aren't going well and those that are and (2) you are willing to admit when you're wrong and that you're committed to fixing mistakes made.
- **Radical candour is not** – stabbing in the front, nit-picking, doesn't need to go up, sideways and down, it's not about getting drunk or driving go carts or dinners, it's not unique to silicon valley or America.
- **Radical candour is universally human but interpersonally and culturally relative** – It loos different in China and Tokyo compared to the middle east or UK.

Get, Give and encourage guidance

- **The 'um' story –** The author did a stellar presentation to the leaders of Google and her boss Sheryl Sandberg. At the conclusion, Sheryl called out all the things that went really well and then said that the author said 'um' too much. The author brushed it off as not a big deal so Sheryl had to double down. She said that the author was super smart but saying 'um' made her look stupid. She offered to get a speech coach to get her to stop saying it.
- **Radical candour –** (1) I admire that about you (2) TO keep winning, criticise the wins
- **Obnoxious Aggression –** (1) front stabbing (2) belittling compliments
- **Manipulative insincerity –** (1) False apology)
- **Ruinous Empathy –** Just trying to say something nice
- **Moving toward radical candour –** (1) Start by asking for criticism not by giving it. (2) Balance praise and criticism, (3) Understand the perilous border between obnoxious aggression and radical candour "your work is shite".
- **Response to your fly is down**

Care
Personally

| Silent—worried about his feelings | Whisper, "Your fly is down!" |
| **Ruinous Empathy** | **Radical Candor** |

Challenge Directly

| **Manipulative Insincerity** | **Obnoxious Aggression** |
| Silent—worried about your feelings | Shout, "Look his fly is down!" |

Understand what motivates each person on your team

- **Rethinking ambition**

STEEP GROWTH TRAJECTORY	GRADUAL GROWTH TRAJECTORY	
Change agent	Force for stability	
Ambitious at work	Ambitious outside of work or simply content in life	
Want new opportunities	Happy in the current role	
"Superstar"	"Rock Star"	

- **Growth management** – instead of talent management
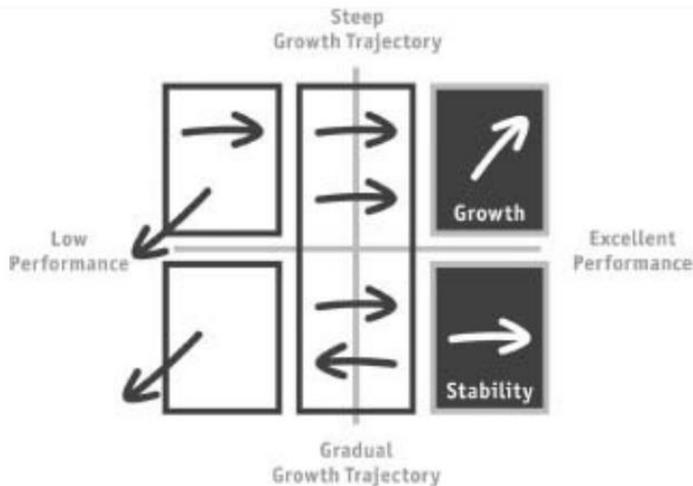
- **Understanding what matters and why** – Need to find out what motivates each person in your team.
- **The problem with passion** – Some work is boring. 'Only about five percent of people have a real vocation in life, and they confuse the hell out of the rest of us'. Whilst the job maybe boring, it might be a part of something bigger. For example, Christopher Wren asking three bricklayers working on St Paul's cathedral what they were doing. The answers were (1) working, (2) building a wall, (3) building a cathedral for the almighty.
- **Excellent performance** – Keep your top performers front of mind, Be a partner not an absentee manager or micromanager
- **Excellent performance / gradual growth trajectory** – Recognise, reward but don't promote. Sometimes it's not time for promotion (pregnant with twins). Ensure you have fair performance ratings. Fair and regular recognition, Respect, there are issues with having a promotion obsession.
- **Excellent performance / steep growth trajectory** – Keep superstars challenged and find out who will replace them when they are gone. Don't squash or block them. Not every superstar wants to manage.
- **Managing the middle** – Raise the bard, there's no such thing as a b-player.
- **Poor performance / negative growth trajectory** – Part ways, How to know when it's time to fire someone. Common lies that managers tell themselves to avoid firing somebody who needs to be fired:
    a. **It will get better**
    b. **Somebody is better than nobody**
    c. **A transfer ins the answer**
    d. **It's bad for morale**
- **Be radically candid with he person you are firing**
    a. **Recall a job you were terrible at and then think how glad you feel that you're no longer in it**
    b. **Retaining people who are doing bad work penalizes the people doing excellent work**
- **Low performers / steep growth trajectory** – Manager look at yourself in the mirror. Wrong role. Personal problems, poor fit
- **No permanent markers** – People change and you have to change with them.

Drive results collaboratively

- **Telling people what to do didn't work at google;**
- **Telling people what to do didn't work for Steve jobs either**
- **The art of getting stuff done without telling people what to do:** Listen -> Clarify -> Debate -> Decide -> Persuade -> Execute - > learn -> Listen
- **Listen** – give the quiet ones a voice. Quiet listening (be silent and give room to talk), loud listening (Put forward a point of view and wait for a response). Create a culture of listening: (1) have a simple system for employees to generate ideas and voice complaints (2) make sure that at least one of the issues raised are quickly addressed (3) regularly offer explanations as to why the other issues aren't being addressed. Adapt to a culture of listening
- **Clarify** – It's only by selection, elimination and emphasis that we understand the real meaning. Be clear in your own mind, create a safe space to nurture new ideas. Be clear to others, make thoughts / ideas drop dead easy for others to comprehend
- **Debate** – The rock tumbler, Keep the conversation focused on ideas not egos. Create an obligation to dissent. Pause for emotion / exhaustion. Use humour and have fun. Be clear when the debate will end. Don't grab a decision just because the debate ahs gotten painful.
- **Decide** – Push decisions into the facts or pull the facts into the decisions but keep ego out. You're not the decider. The decider should get facts not recommendations, Go spelunking / caving. Get into the detail.
- **Persuade** – emotion, credibility, logic. Emotion – the listeners emotions not the speakers. Credibility – demonstrate expertise and humility, Logic – show your work.
- **Execute** – Minimise the collaboration tax, don't waste your teams time, keep the dirt under your fingernails, block time to execute.
- **Learn** – Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. Pressure to be consistent. Burnout.

Tools and techniques

Relationships

- **Stay Centred –** you don't give a damn about others if you don't give a damn about yourself. Work life integration. Figure out your recipe and stay centred and stick to it. Put tasks for yourself in your calendar. Show up for yourself.
- **Free at work**
- **Master the art of socialising ant work –** even non-mandatory events can feel mandatory, booze – keep it to a minimum,
- **Respect boundaries –** building trust, sharing values, demonstrating openness, Physical space, Hugging is fine. If more than 6 seconds it generates oxytocin and serotonin. Recognising how your emotions, master your reaction to others emotions,

Guidance – ideas for getting , giving, encouraging praise and criticism.

- **Soliciting impromptu guidance** – embrace the discomfort.
- **Orange box** – make it safe and natural to provide criticism.
- **Management Fix It weeks**
- **Giving impromptu guidance –** be humble. Situation< Behaviour, Impact. Be helpful. Give feedback immediately. In person. Praise in public, criticise in private. Don't personalise.
- **Gauge your impromptu guidance, get a baseline, track your improvements**
- **Be radically candid with your boss**

- **Gender and guidance –** why radical candour may be harder for men managing women. Why gender bias makes radical candour harder for women. Men: Don't pull punches with women and Women: Demand criticism. Men and Women: Things to think about when you feel a woman is being too aggressive. Things to think about if you're a woman who's being told 'you're abrasive'
- **Formal performance reviews**
- **Prevent backstabbing**
- **Peer guidance**
- **Speaking truth to power**

Team

- **Career conversations** – understand people's motivations and ambitions to help them take a step in the direction of their dreams. Conversation one: Life story. Second conversation: dreams. Conversation three: eighteen month plan.
- **Growth management** – figure out who needs what types of opportunities and how you're going to provide them. Put names in boxes temporarily. Write growth plans. Don't be an easy grader or hard grader. Ensure fairness by level.
- **Hiring**: Your mentality and your process – Process
- **Firing** – a necessary evil. Don't wait too long. Don't make the decision unilaterally, give a damn. Follow up.
- **Promotions** – Be fair
- **Reward your rock stars** – don't give all the glory to the superstars. Say 'thank you'. Gurus, Public presentations
- **Avoid absentee management and micromanagement**

ABSENTEE MANAGEMENT	PARTNERSHIP	MICROMANAGEMENT
Hands-off, ears off, mouth off.	Hands-on, ears on, mouth off.	Hands-on, ears off, mouth on.
Lacks curiosity. Doesn't want to know.	Displays curiosity. Recognizes when they need to know more.	Lacks curiosity. Pretends to know all.
Doesn't listen. Says nothing.	Listens. Asks why.	Doesn't listen. Tells how.
Is afraid of *any* details.	Asks about *relevant* details.	Gets lost in the details.
Has no idea what's going on.	Is informed because hands-on.	Asks for make-work presentations, reports, and updates.
Sets no goals.	Leads collaborative goal-setting.	Sets goals arbitrarily.
Remains unaware of problems.	Listens to problems. Predicts problems. Brainstorms solutions.	Tells people how to solve problems without fully understanding them.
Causes collateral damage by tripping on grenades unawares.	Removes obstacles and defuses explosive situations.	Tells people how to remove obstacles/defuse situations, but watches from a safe distance.
Is ignorant of both the questions and the answers.	Shares what they know; asks questions when they don't	Pretends to know when they don't.

Results

- **1:1 Conversations** – employees set the agenda, you listen and help them clarify . Mindset, frequency, show up.
- **Staff meetings** – review metrics, study hall updates and identify but don't make key decisions.
- **Think time** – block out time to think and hold that sacred.
- **Big debate meetings** – lowering the tension by making it clear that you are debating and not deciding.
- **Big decision meetings** – push decisions into the facts pull facts into the decisions and keep egos at bay
- **All hands meetings** – bring others along

- **Execution time** – fight meeting proliferation
- **Kanban boards** – make activity and workflows visible
- **Walk around** – learn about small problems to prevent big ones.
- **Be conscious of culture** – everyone is watching you but that doesn't' mean it's about you. People are listening.