

Essential Leadership Practices to Strengthen the Workforce

On January 30, 2023, SNI hosted a webinar featuring Patrick Kneeland, VP, Medical Affairs at DispatchHealth. Below are key takeaways from the session.

The Surprising Science of High Functioning Teams

In research done at Google, high functioning teams had "**equality in distribution of conversational turn-taking**," high "**average social sensitivity**" (i.e., could intuit how others felt based on nonverbal cues), and had **leaders who demonstrated vulnerability**.



Ask Yourself: Think about a leader who created a positive, safe work environment and inspired you to come to work each day. What about them was so effective?

These features all enhance **psychological safety**, a "shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking" ¹ within a **learning organization**, a place "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire... and where people are continually learning how to learn together" ².

High-Yield Leadership Skills to Address Challenging Scenarios

In challenging scenarios (e.g., frustrated team members, resource limitations, and expectations from higher-ups), leaders often default to getting defensive and/or explaining excuses, throwing someone else under the bus, or going straight to the technical solution and/or data. Instead, try these **six high-yield leadership skills**:

Check Yourself

"Check yourself" in the moment before going down a default path. Ask yourself, "whether I agree with it or not, this is the other person's truth. What emotion are they experiencing?"

Ask Powerful Questions

Ask questions that are open-ended, nonjudgmental, exploratory, and where the answer is unknown to you.

Active Listening

Listen actively and without interruption.

Reflective Listening

Listen with an attitude of curiosity and staying out of judgment, and with reflection back to the speaker.

Check In

Spend 1-3 minutes checking in with teams before diving into the work.

Recognize and Respond to Emotion

Before problem solving, use these PEARLS to respond to emotion:

- **Partnership:** How could we walk through this together?
- **Empathy:** I imagine that has been very difficult for you.
- **Apology/Acknowledgement:** I am sorry I don't have better news; this has been challenging.
- **Respect:** You have worked hard on this.
- **Legitimization:** Anyone who has gone through this would be angry.
- **Support:** How can I support next steps?

1. Edmondson, A. (1999). *Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999>

2. Senge, Peter M. (1990). *The fifth discipline : the art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday/Currency,