**C3Advantage Leader Insights by Cheryl Scanlan**

**I’m Confused!**

"I'm confused" is a clear and simple indicator or diagnostic tool of a potential threat to employee engagement and productivity. When that phrase is used often, it indicates that leadership is ignoring a bigger issue within the organization that, without addressing it, will frustrate progress.

Language expressing confusion communicates a temporary stall in progress and is typically caused for one of the following:

1. Team members are not clear on their roles and/or responsibilities
2. Team members are not willing to engage in their roles for reasons such as:
   * Fear of failure
   * Fear of reprisal if they ask questions
   * Lack of commitment
   * Irritation with other team members and a sense of "holding out" until someone else gets their job done
   * Team members have developed a "group think" mentality creating their own culture of sluggishness. Once one person says, "I'm confused," it's not long before that mindset of helplessness is adopted by an entire team and from there can quickly move outward and into an entire organization.

Fortunately, "I'm confused" is an early indicator of a need to engage with the team member(s) vitally. Starting with hearing from the employee and having them own his/her confusion is the first step towards reconstructing the environment into a culture engaged in productivity (delete engaged culture).

First, ask," what are you confused about?" and listen. Don't say a word until you have heard them out. This first step let's them know you are listening, in which the lack thereof can become (delete being typically being) a typical catalyst for an organization spiraling into a culture of confusion.

Second, ask "what do they need to know that would remove the confusion?" Again, be quiet and listen. This second question empowers the employee to decide what is necessary and even more important, own their desire to re-engage.

Third, ask "what do you need from me to help you get there?" Again, be quiet and listen. By asking this question last, you have the employee own his/her confusion and their fix first. Anything shared now is less likely to be about blaming you and more about collaborating with you as they take steps towards re-engaging in their role.

Bottomline, resist rolling your eyes or raising your hands in exasperation when you hear "I'm confused." This is probably less about you explaining something for the 100th time and more about listening for the first time.

***Cheryl Scanlan, MCC, CMCC, BCC is president of C3Advantage. She has worked with CEOs that are in Fortune 100 through next generation small business owners. Having also run a multi-million dollar firm in New York, Cheryl knows the importance of business goals and the impact of teams. Cheryl's thought partnering method helps leaders see clearly what is fuzzy, articulate what is currently unintelligible, and generate coherent and executable strategy.***