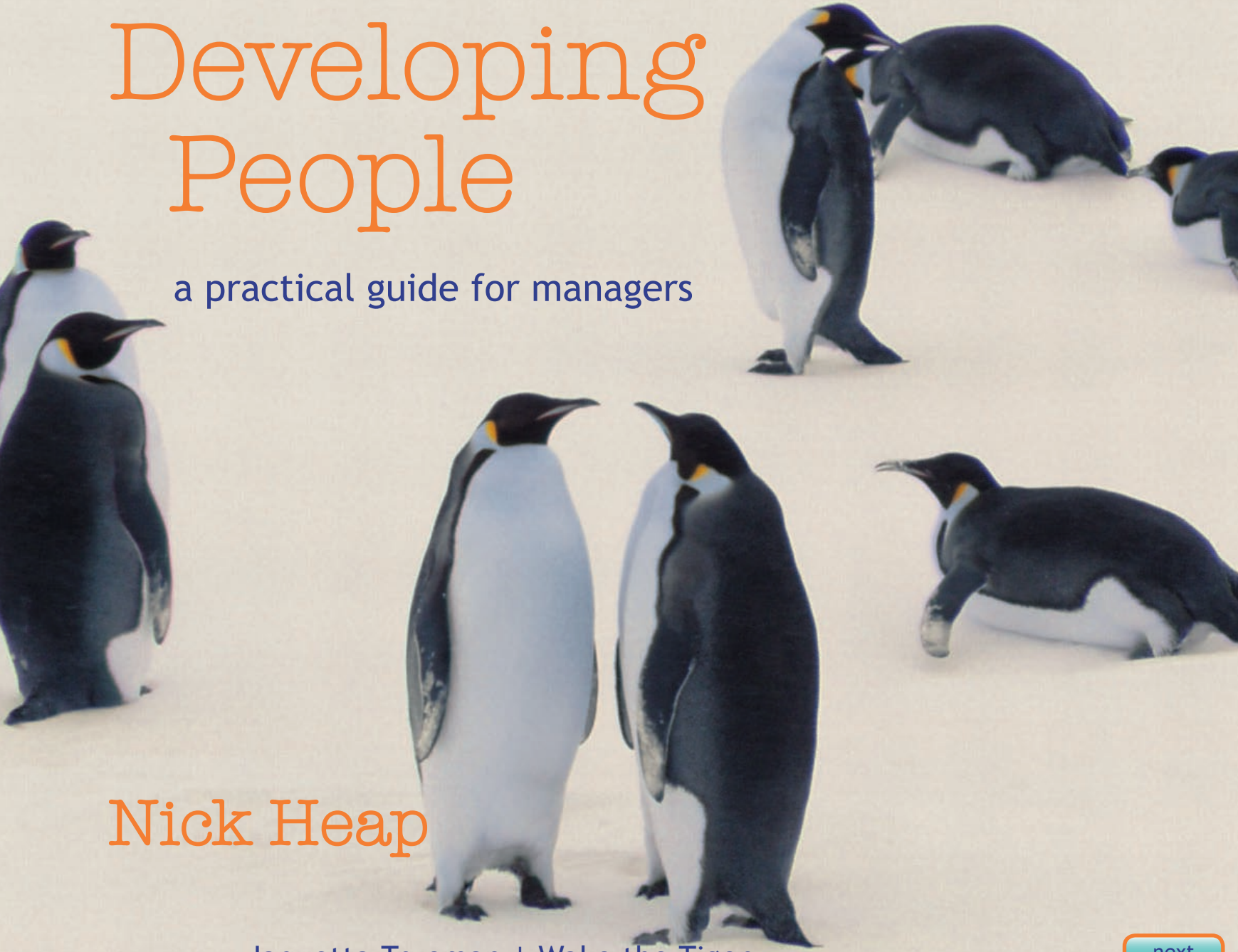
Developing People

a practical guide for managers



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Introduction

This guide describes simple practical activities that you can use to help your people develop. They will also help your business because your people will contribute more and work better together. You will probably find that they save you time and effort too.

I have distilled these notes from thirty years experience helping people develop. There is more about me here. The ideas in the guide are suggestions for things you may want to try. Please adapt them freely and use them flexibly.

Why Develop People?

- It is a key role of a manager to tell people clearly what we want them to do and how well they are doing it.
- Managers have a duty to their people and to their organisations to develop people and help them contribute.

How Do You Develop People?

- You can choose from a continuum of methods. These range from teaching to listening.
- Teaching people what to do and how to do it can be quick and easy. It can leave people dependent on you and discourage them from independent thinking.
- Just listening helps people think for themselves and come up with new solutions. This can take time and they may miss valuable input from you.
- In any real situation, you will use a mixture of approaches to suit the situation and people.
- 'Coaching' and 'mentoring' are ill-defined terms that can span the range. Coaching is usually closer to listening and mentoring closer to teaching.
- Sometimes, you will need to tell people first the clear and uncomfortable truth about their performance, before you offer any help.

Preparation

Why Prepare?

- You will be more effective in developing your people if you think about it beforehand.
- Developing people can be challenging. It deserves your full attention.
- All your people are individuals. There is no formula that fits everyone.

How To Prepare?

- Think about what you want to achieve and the benefits that will flow from success.
- Decide to do it, even if you think it may be uncomfortable. Developing people takes guts.
- Remember when someone helped you develop. What did that person do that worked? How did you gain? How did you view him or her afterwards?
- Remember a time when you developed people successfully? What did you do? What were the results?



Listening [1]

Why Listen?

Listening is crucial to all aspects of developing people. If you are trying to help an individual or a group, listen first to understand the people and the situation. Then you will know the best way to help.

Listening is the most powerful and underrated social skill. It is more than hearing what people say. When you listen well, you are attending with all of your senses and with full concentration to another human being and not paying attention to anything else, including your inner chatter. When people notice this, they feel heard, valued and sometimes vulnerable. They are able to think aloud and then know themselves better.

How to Listen?

- The first thing to do is to decide to do it as well as you are able. When you have decided you will know what to do. What follows is just a reminder.
- Find a setting where the person you are going to listen to will be comfortable. This should be private and free of interruptions, if possible.
- When you listen, look warmly at the person. The person may look away as they talk, but will want you to be looking towards them when they finish and turn back to you.
- Don't fidget, interrupt or distract. Don't pay much attention to what the conversation stirs up in you.
- Summarise at intervals to check you have understood what has been said and the feelings underlying it.
- Follow the other person's agenda.
- Ask a few gentle open questions to encourage sharing, but don't probe too much.
- When you know the person well, you may notice conflicts between what they say and

Listening 2

how they say it. If they say they are very miserable with a big smile, they may think they have to be brave. You can then ask a gentle question about this and perhaps get a bit deeper.

When to Listen?

- All interactions with other people are improved by listening.
- If you want to influence anyone, it helps to listen first to understand his or her point of view and needs. Then you will know how to make a proposal that will get a "yes".
- The above applies even in conflict situations. A conflict that you resolve in a win/win way leaves the relationship stronger.
- If you want to motivate your staff, you can find out what they want and need by listening to them.
- You can ask your staff or colleagues about their long-term ambitions and by listening, help them plan how to get there.
- Listening is key to effective customer service. If you listen to what your customers want and they see you working hard to provide it, they will respond positively.



Appreciation [1]

What is Appreciation?

When you tell someone you value his or her specific contribution you are giving appreciation. Suppose you had asked someone for some thoughts on a current situation. You could say something like "Thank you for your excellent note. It was short, you did it very promptly and it answered all the questions I had."

Why Give Appreciation?

- It makes people feel good and increases their energy and commitment.
- It rewards and encourages the behaviour you want.
- It encourages people to pay attention to, and magnify, what already works well.
- It quickly spreads, if you take the lead, and increases co-operation and teamwork.
- It is good to give and costs nothing.
- If you give it a lot, you will eventually get some for yourself.

How to Use Appreciation Informally

- Appreciate people doing things right as you see them doing their work. This can be as ordinary as saying "What a lovely tidy desk", when he or she is the only person with a tidy desk in the office!
- Appreciate people who make a special effort. "Thanks for staying over to get that proposal off last night. You had to do it in a rush, but it still looked very professional, as always".
- Appreciate people who try to help. Someone might give you an idea that looks impracti-cal. You could say, "Thank you for that, your ideas are always interesting. Do you have any thoughts on the first steps?"
- Appreciate your boss! He or she is human and will respond positively. You could say, "I appreciate your supporting my position at the project planning meeting".

Appreciation [2]

- Be careful to be genuine. Don't use appreciation mechanically and routinely. You won't want people to feel manipulated.

At Meetings

- When you have a particularly good meeting, talk about what made it go so well and why.
- If you wish, you can give each other appreciation on your contribution to the success of a very important or extended meeting or project.
- After every meeting, ask the people for their thoughts on what went well at the meeting and why. You can then use these thoughts to make every meeting go as well.

For Organisation Development

There is a new approach to managing change based on appreciation called Appreciative Inquiry. You find out what already works well and help people build from this. For example, if you wanted to increase peoples' commitment to customer care, you would find examples in the organisation where this was already going well. Then you would help them create a shared vision to build on this and make it even better. Then you plan how to achieve this.

When to Use Appreciation

- When you genuinely value what someone else has done or how he or she is.
- When someone who works for you or a colleague has done a good piece of work.
- When you are in a meeting, especially one that is going well.
- When a project has been successful.
- When you want to create a positive cultural change



Teaching [1]

What is Teaching as a Way of Developing People?

Teaching is one way of helping. The person doing the teaching has the knowledge, contacts and experience that will help another person perform. A colleague may ask you about how to set up a project. If you say, "I have found it helps to spend time getting to know the other people who might be involved first, before doing any detailed planning", then you have started teaching

Why Teach?

- It helps your people perform better
- It avoids duplicating work.
- You get more successful outcomes first time.
- Everyone involved finds it is personally rewarding
- It builds your relationship.

How to Teach?

- You have to listen carefully first to decide if teaching is the right way to help. It is more likely to be appropriate if the issue is technical, emotionally neutral and about doing a task. You also need to have the expertise to pass on. If it does not fit the above, you can still help but will need to use counselling skills not teaching.
- Set up the conditions right to help the person talk to you. You can agree how long you have got. Most people would rather have a few minutes of someone's undivided attention than longer when their "teacher" seems distracted. If possible, find a comfortable private place where you will not be interrupted. Tell him or her it will help to say "I don't understand" or "Please go through that again".
- Ask an open question to encourage the person to talk about the situation and the

Teaching 2

help she or he wants. You might say, "What is it about setting up a project that you would like to talk about? Listen hard to understand how the person thinks about this. Ask questions and summarise what you hear.

- Pass on to the person the most important things that you have learned that have helped you with their particular topic. Link what you say to what he or she said. Do this in small steps and in gentle language that they can hear. Ask what the person makes of each idea you share and how this links to their own experience. We learn by relating new knowledge to what we already know.
- Ask the person about what he or she has learned from the time with you and his or her plans. Then talk about what was good about the way you worked together and how to make it better next time.

When to Teach?

- When you have technical knowledge or managerial experience that someone else needs to have quickly if they are to succeed.
- When the issue is relatively simple and there is at least one approach that will work reliably.
- When you and the person have a clear and agreed picture of what you are both trying to achieve.
- As a teaching relationship develops over time you will discuss more complex, emotional, and challenging issues. These may require you to add counselling skills.



Co-Consulting [1]

What is Co-Consulting?

Co-consulting is a simple way for people to help each other. For (say) half an hour one person, the "client" talks to another person, the "consultant" about an issue that is important to the client. The consultant, listens, asks questions and helps the client think. After half an hour and a brief discussion about the process, reverse the roles and do it again. It is very easy to set up. Just introduce the idea and ask the new person if he or she would like to talk first.

Why Co-Consult?

- It is much more effective and goes much deeper than an ordinary two-way conversation.
- It builds understanding between people.
- It can provide new perspectives and new solutions to problems.
- It develops key managerial and developmental skills such as listening and empathy.
- You can use very short sessions of (say) five minutes each way, to create support and involvement in meetings and workshops.
- You can use it within your managerial team to help you develop each other and solve interesting problems too.
- You can use it with people outside the organisation to get new views and thoughts on issues.

How do you Co-Consult?

- When you are the consultant listen hard, show understanding and encourage the client to think aloud. It is your job to help him or her think not to solve the problem.
- Ask questions to help the client to think and explore.
- When you are the client, show how you feel about the issue as well as what you think about it.

Co-Consulting [2]

- Make and keep a clear agreement on having equal time otherwise the other person will feel exploited.
- As consultant keep your attention on the client's concerns or he or she will feel let down. This means deciding not to pay attention to the thoughts that you have about how the client's issue affects you.
- Have a clear agreement about confidentiality before you start and stick to it.
- After each person's turn, spend a few minutes talking about what the consultant and client did to help the session go well. If you wish, also talk about how the next one could go even better.

When to use Co-Consulting?

- When you have an issue you are stuck on, talk it over with your consultant. You can listen to that person when it suits you both. This does not have to be immediately after your session.
- When you want to build a relationship within your team or elsewhere.
- When you want to think broadly about yourself or your career. Talking about something when someone else is listening will always help you think more clearly.
- When you want a new perspective on an issue. Then co-consulting with someone outside the organisation may help. That person will not share your assumptions or history.



Counselling [1]

What is Counselling?

Counselling is about helping people help themselves. It is particularly helpful when the solution is not obvious and the person's personal commitment to act is essential. There may be a strong emotional component too. If someone says to you, "I am worried about the way my career is going" and you respond gently with "Oh dear, why is that?", you are counselling. Sometimes people worry that "counselling" is only for deep crises and should only be offered by experts. The basic skills of counselling, mainly listening, are always useful and can prevent minor problems becoming crises.

Why use Counselling?

- It helps people think for themselves and develop self-confidence.
- It helps people develop self-awareness and awareness of others.
- It helps people solve problems or create opportunities and learn how to do so.
- It is enormously satisfying to see people grow.
- It develops independence of thought so people become less dependent on you.
- It helps people become more flexible and adaptable.

How do you Counsel someone?

- First, decide you are going to listen to the person and show you are listening with all of you.
- Discuss and agree and stick to rules about confidentiality and how long you have. A fixed time of (say) half an hour works much better than an open-ended commitment.
- Your job is to help the other person help him/her self. If this person is to feel safe enough to be open about her or his thoughts and feelings, he or she needs to feel safe, respected and understood.

Counselling 2

- You must listen so that the person can develop his or her thinking. Summarise back what you hear.
- Don't judge, so he or she feels safe and respected.
- Pay attention so that the person knows you care.
- Accept that he or she feels the way he or she does, even if you can't understand why.
- Imagine yourself in your person's shoes and tell him or her what you conclude, gently.
- Encourage her or him to tell you directly and powerfully how she or he feels about their concern. Go for a feeling, like sad or angry. If she or he cries or laughs or gets cross, then congratulations! Expressing feelings like this is healing and harmless, even if it is sometimes uncomfortable to witness.
- Ask open questions to help the person think more broadly about the issue.
- Encourage the person to decide what to do, after a thorough exploration of the issue.

When to Use Counselling?

- When your colleague or friend is stuck or confused and wants someone to talk to. He or she may ask for advice, for you to tell her what to do, but this is rarely helpful even when asked for. Listening and exploring are usually much more useful.
- When the issues are personal and emotionally loaded. If you are feeling bad, it is very difficult to think straight until you have expressed your feelings and had them heard. Counselling skills are very effective here.
- When you are stuck or puzzled by something, even a technical problem, ask a friend at work to listen to you for a few minutes as you explain the situation. Explaining it will generate a new thought and help you move on. Your friend will have been your counsellor, probably without knowing it.
- If you are going to be serious about developing people, you will often have

Counselling [3]

unexpected and sometimes disturbing things to deal with. As you get closer to people you start to feel their pain and their joys more. Even joys can disturb, you may find they make you see something missing from your life you had not noticed before. One way to deal with this is to make regular time to talk about you with a counsellor. This could be two-way sessions with a colleague using "co-consulting" rules. Another reason for doing this is to increase your understanding of what it is like to be a "client".



Developmental Meetings [1]

What are Developmental Meetings?

A developmental meeting is a meeting to think about how to do things better. The format and atmosphere is different from a meeting to progress day to day matters. You need to help people share their thoughts and feelings easily and openly. For example, a meeting where you ask people to say what they think about a topic while everyone else listens would be a developmental meeting.

Why Have Developmental Meetings?

- They stimulate thought about how you work together, and lead to improvements.
- They help you appreciate and use each other's strengths, interests and contribution.
- They help you eliminate duplication and unnecessary work.
- They help you shape your future together.
- They create new ideas and energy.
- They help to stretch people.

How to Run Developmental Meetings?

- Start the meeting by going round the group and asking everyone to say something positive, while everyone else just listens. You can ask them to say something that is going well, or something directly related to the topic. For example, if you are discussing customer service, it might help to ask them to say why this is important to them. This activity helps people to connect to each other and be positive.
- Create an agenda from the group's key interests and concerns. You can ask everyone what the most important issues are that he or she would like the group to work on today. List the issues on a flip chart without editing or comment. Then ask each person to tick off the (say) three issues from the list that she or he would like to work on. The issues with the most ticks are the agenda for the meeting.

Developmental Meetings 2

- Ask the participants to share their best thinking on a topic or issue for (say) two minutes, while everyone else just listens attentively. This makes the noisy people focus their energy and gives the quiet ones time to think. They also don't have to fight for attention. Have a turn yourself but go last if you are the most senior person at the meeting. When everyone has been heard, the rest of the meeting often goes very well.
- Use sub-groups. If you form small groups from the people with most interest in a topic, you will get more and better work done than if you stay together. Groups of three to five are the most effective for producing and testing ideas.
- If you need to get everyone thinking about something quickly, ask people to take a few minutes each way talk and listen to each other in pairs. This is particularly effective when you are a bit stuck on something controversial. The thoughts from their paired discussions are usually constructive. Pair-work is useful you want a thoughtful response to an announcement of a change. You can ask each pair to come up with a question or a comment. You will get more and more thoughtful responses.
- At the end of the meeting, or half way through if it is a long one, go round the group and ask people for their thoughts about the meeting. You can ask people what they learned, what was good about it and how the next one could be better. This will not only improve the meetings, it will also share the responsibility for them working well.

When to Have Developmental Meetings?

- When you want to improve the quality of your work together.
- When your conventional meetings need a lift.

Developmental Meetings [3]

- When you have a new challenge to face and want your colleagues input.
- When you need ideas and new approaches.
- When you are going through or managing a change.
- When you need to get co-operation across the organisation or between your organisation and another.



Delegation [1]

What is Delegation?

Delegation is when you give a task to someone else to do. This is often someone who works for you directly. It does not have to be. Some people get rid of a lot of work by delegating it upwards to their managers.

Why Delegate?

- No manager can do all the work him or herself, so some delegation is essential.
- Delegation can help the person receiving the work develop new skills and confidence.
- A new person will put a new mind on a task and may discover a better way to do it.
- Delegation may free you to concentrate your special expertise on the highest value tasks.

How to Delegate?

- Think about the task and the person you propose to give it to. If it is to be developmental, the task should be a stretch and be possible for the person to accomplish.
- Talk about the task with the person and give lots of background so she or he understands what the results will be used for. Discuss the objectives, standards and time scales you require. Don't ask for higher standards than you need. Agree when you will have a chat about how it is going. Be clear when you are available if there are major problems.
- Be prepared to accept that the way someone else will do the job will not be exactly as you would have done it. When you get the result avoid being too picky or you will make it more difficult to delegate in future.
- If the person comes to you for help with the task, first ask questions and help her or him solve the problem, or investigate resources to solve it, for her or himself. If you give detailed expert "help", you will encourage dependence and the task may end up back with you.

Delegation 2

- When the task is complete you can both talk about how it went and if there is anything you can learn to make the next one go even better.
- Ask the person you delegated to what she or he has learned and what else she or he might like to attempt.

When to Delegate?

- When you are spending too much time on day-to-day tasks with no time to think about the big picture.
- When you have someone working for you who could do higher value work.
- When you can see the potential of someone and you will lose that person unless he or she is stretched.
- When you need a new way of tackling a task that comes up regularly.
- When you want to see what a promising person is capable of.



Further Information

You may find the following websites useful:

- There are over two hundred articles and other resources on my site, Practical Developmental Ideas. You are free to use and adapt these ideas, but please say where you found them.
- Appreciative Inquiry is a profound and positive way to facilitate change. There is also an excellent list-serve here.
- Re-Evaluation Counselling is a way for us to recover our ability to think and act intelligently and to help other people do so.
- There are articles about human skills on Robert Bacal's very rich site.
- For free tips, tools, articles, links and ezines about learning, see The Guide to Active Reviewing.
- Click here for information about the author.
- This ebook has been designed and wittily brought to life by Jaquetta Trueman at wakethetiger.com.



About the Author

I have been an independent facilitator of change and development for over thirty years. It is critical that we learn how to listen to each other better. We have the resources and skills to solve most of our problems if only we will listen. This has been my life's work.

It has led to counselling people, facilitating groups and teams and helping managers think more clearly by listening to them. I have worked with a wide variety of organisations in the private and public sector.

I also use appreciative inquiry to enable change.

I am a founder member of The Flame Institute, which works with people to help them discover their core strength and purpose.

Contact Me

If you would like help using these materials or want to discuss other aspects of personal, management or organisation development, please call, email or write to me. I will be delighted to hear from you.

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