



# PETRA PEOPLE

FOUR SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BUILD A  
STRONGER RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR TEAM



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### LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

I like to start my business coaching sessions by asking a question to the group. The questions vary from session to session, but lately, I've been getting great responses from "What are you reading right now?" It's a simple question that can be answered quickly, and it usually has a simple answer. I can tell a lot about the individuals in the room from their response: what topics interest them, whether they like fiction or nonfiction or if they even read at all.

The best questions open up a dialogue among team members that never would have happened otherwise. A conversation starts, and after about five minutes, every member of the organization knows something about their teammate that they didn't know when they arrived that day.

Open conversation is at the heart of healthy workplace communication. It's crucial for a team to work well together. After all, how can you really know what people are interested in or capable of unless you ask and give them the opportunity to show you?

Here are four steps to start those crucial conversations — and keep them going:

#### **ASK SIMPLE QUESTIONS.**

Many business leaders spend a lot of time on processes and get lost in the weeds of their business. They waste time by making things complicated and neglecting to see the bigger picture. The same mistake can be made in conversation.

One simple question is all you need to begin a conversation. Don't start out by asking questions so deep or probing that you catch your team members off guard, and definitely don't talk about work. Questions like, "What are you reading?" or "What music do you like?" are great places to start. Take the time necessary to get personal.

Small talk, if you do it right, can yield big results.

## **SHARE YOUR STORY, AND INVITE YOUR TEAM TO SHARE THEIRS.**

When you share your story, it does a lot more than simply convey information. It builds trust and allows your team to see you as a person. In turn, it invites others to share their own stories and thoughts, enriching both personal and professional relationships.

You'll be surprised by what you learn and how it might benefit your business. For example, you might learn that Joe in human resources has a background in astrophysics or that Sally in marketing studied film in school. These hidden gems will offer alternate solutions and fresh ideas, simply based on their unique experiences.

But you'll only know if you start the conversation and listen. Don't miss the opportunity to tap the expertise of every member of your team.

## **BE TRANSPARENT.**

If someone asks you a question, answer it as best as you can — every time.

Of course, there will be times you won't have the answer, or there will be things you won't be able to talk about. That's OK. Just be as honest and transparent as possible.

If you appear to avoid questions or give answers that seem lacking, you'll lose the trust of your team.

## **MAKE CONVERSATIONS ONGOING.**

Make sure the interactions you have with your teammates are not one and done. Follow up on those conversations and keep them going.

Did you figure out that you're both reading the same book? Talk about it over lunch when you're finished. Keep learning and sharing. You'll set an example for your team, and others will begin acting in kind. It will set the tone for a culture of communication.

Most importantly: listen. I've worked with many dominant personalities who genuinely had trouble with this concept. When someone is talking, don't spend the time thinking about what you're going to say next. Listen and engage. You'll learn more about your team members on a personal level — their challenges and their victories — and you might just learn something about yourself along the way.

*This article originally appeared in Forbes.*

# THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

**The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.**

## **Looking to change your business life - forever?**

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

*Andy Bailey is lead entrepreneur coach with business coaching firm Petra and serves as the Entrepreneur Organization's global membership director. Visit his blog at [www.petracoach.com](http://www.petracoach.com) for more business and leadership insight.*

### **PETRA COACH**

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