

LYSSA ADKINS

#future-fit leaders

EXTEND THEIR FUTURE-FIT
CAPABILITIES TO THE
GROUPS THEY WORK IN

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WHY FUTURE-FIT LEADERSHIP MATTERS

In this series on future-fit leadership, I have offered nine areas of development for leaders who want to become fit for complexity, fit for constant and turbulent change and fit for the exponential era. In other words, fit for the world we are already in and that is on a path to intensify. This will continue to call us to develop ourselves to meet it.

The nine areas of development I have earmarked are:

1 #Future-fit leaders are needed right now.

2 #Future-fit leaders are tooled-up for constant and turbulent change.

3 #Future-fit leaders are collapse-aware.

4 #Future-fit leaders equally consider humans and nature

5 #Future-fit leaders dance between left and right-brain thinking.

6 #Future-fit leaders consciously choose from the full array of masculine and feminine essence energies.

7 #Future-fit leaders expand their own sensemaking.

8 #Future-fit leaders integrate their shadows.

9 #Future-fit leaders take responsibility for their state at all times.

Future-Fit Leadership Starts with You, But Doesn't End with You

And, now we arrive at the final one:

10 #Future-fit leaders extend their future-fit capabilities to the groups they work in.

While it is true that your leadership development starts with you, it definitely does not end with you. All along the way, you are being challenged, opened-up and shaped by your interactions with those at work (and at home, and at the gym, etc). If you use these interactions as teachers, they will deliver the lessons you need. And, as you develop even one little bit of a new capability, you have the opportunity to repay the lesson by extending that capability to the groups you work with. There is no need to wait until you have “arrived” and you feel confident that your leadership is fit for our times and the rapidly advancing future. Truly, there is no “there there.” It’s a moving target. As soon as you have a new perspective or capability that would be useful for the groups you work with, it’s time to extend it from yourself to them.

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THE VISION: FUTURE-FIT TEAMS IN FLOW

Imagine your entire leadership team with these future-fit capabilities on board. This team uses all kinds of intelligence, not just the intelligence of their logical brains. It's a team that can pause and give space for the brilliant, emergent idea to come. It's one that is sometimes thoughtful in its communication patterns and other times very lively, depending on what is needed and what is actually arising in the moment. It's one in which the members facilitate and coach one another in the moment when they are interacting in a way that dampens their collaboration, creativity, communication, change, or conflict capabilities (what I call the 5 CCs, the 5 Core Competencies of robust teams). In other words, it's very alive. The team is very much in the flow of life, in the flow of creativity, in the flow of innovation, in the flow of generativity. From this flow, the ability to harness change for good and the ability to make healthy decisions even in the midst of great anxiety emerges. Does it sound as good to you as it sounds to me?

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THE GAP: FROM ‘NORMAL’ TO FUTURE-FIT TEAMS

What we have now is a far cry from this. Most leadership teams, or groups, you work in probably have what you would consider very normal meetings and interactions, not knowing what tremendous upside is possible. When I observe “normal” meetings, what I see is a lot of waste and a lot of missed opportunities. Normal meetings are full of people holding back. Normal meetings are loud with a few voices dominating and the rest taking a back seat. Normal meetings revolve around someone in positional or expertise power making a suggestion and everyone else going with it, without really investigating it. Or on the other hand, normal meetings sound like rapid fire with one idea coming after the other, one after the other, one after the other so fast it makes your head spin. And the group gets nowhere. None of this is a good set of conditions for surviving constant and turbulent change, never mind thriving and helping others thrive. All groups, and especially leadership teams, need to radically upshift.

Bridging the Gap: The Role of Individual Leaders

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How do we get there? Well, one route is through you. It's worth a reprise: Although becoming future-fit starts with you, it doesn't end with you. If you develop yourself to be the best future-fit leader in the world, unless the people around you also become future-fit, it will be very hard for you to enact the new capabilities, awarenesses and options that have become available.

Here are three ways to help the groups and teams you work with become more future-fit.

Do Your Development Work Out Loud

One of the most liberating qualities of the modern working world is the ability to do things in full transparency. This extends not just to project data and information but also to the very way we interact with one another. You don't have to hide that you are trying to develop yourself. You can tell people about it. You can be specific. You can ask for help. The people around you are the ones seeing your actions and feeling the impacts. They are perfectly placed to help you see when you are developing and when you are falling back. If you enlist the people around you to help you're providing a strong example and a clear signal that this kind of development work is allowed.

Let's say that you are working on the shadow of judgment. You are trying to notice when you judge things harshly or quickly. Sometimes you don't catch yourself in time but later realize you have shut down the group's healthy creativity and communication. You can tell people this is what you are developing in yourself and you can ask for help. It might sound like this: "I realize I jump to judgments pretty fast and that can sometimes shut you all down. That's not what I want. So if you catch me doing this, will you very gently ask me if I have a judgment or assumption at play? If you do that, I will be able to pause and genuinely ask myself that question. I'll be able to tell you what's going on for me and, from there, we can figure out what needs to be adjusted." You can actually ask for that kind of help and become an example of a leader doing their development work out loud, and making it okay for others to do the same.

Share Your Micro-Practices

Bring in your micro-practices. Whatever you are practicing, you can bring it into the groups you work with. Believe me, others need it, too. The very things that you are practicing in order to make yourself a more future-fit leader are the things you can offer to them. You don't need to do a lot of education about it or grandstand on the reasons why we would want to develop ourselves in a certain way. You just bring the practice in.

Let's say you are working on being responsible for your state at all times and you are practicing noticing when your nervous system gets activated and when you start to move into amygdala hijack. When you notice this happening, you can offer your micro practice to the group. It might sound something like this: "I don't know about you all, but I'm finding myself getting a little activated. My nervous system is going on high alert. I need to get myself back in top shape. Maybe you do, too. So what I want to offer to all of us is that we just stand up and walk around the room for two minutes. Then, come and sit back down again to continue this conversation. Let's see if that opens up new avenues for us." You have given them permission to do something brave and when they do – lo and behold – it opens up new avenues. And, it has taught them an important practice they can use going forward.

Foster a Developmental Culture

Encourage a deliberately developmental environment. Imagine an environment where everyone tells everyone else how they're developing themselves and what they're currently working on. In doing so, they enlist each other's help in developing rapidly. To help others become future-fit, encourage dialogue about developing oneself. Make it a normal conversation.

Let's say you are working with someone on a problem. Instead of staying only in the problem and solution space you could also ask questions that allow the other person to consider how their own level of development is affecting their ability to work this problem. Imagine the problem is with a product line that has faltering sales and you're trying to figure out what to do about it. Certainly, you can be in the conversation with them about the product line itself, conditions of the market, theories about why sales are falling, what strategies might be available, etc etc. You are used to this kind of conversation. You know how to do it. No problem with this kind of conversation, except that it keeps us in the narrow band of our own well-worn patterns and intelligence. To expand this into future-fit capabilities, you could also bring in questions to help the other person think about how they think. Or, a statement that helps them start to see how they are approaching the problem and how that might be too constricting for fully solving it. (For some go-to questions, see [#Future-fit leaders expand their own sensemaking](#)).

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THE JOURNEY AHEAD: EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE

These are just three ways to get started. I am confident you will find your own, as well. And, if you miss an opportunity or try something that doesn't quite work, don't worry. Where we are headed is into more complexity, uncertainty and more turbulence. Sooner or later, conditions in the world will offer you a new opportunity to practice and to help others become future-fit.

LYSSA IS A LEADERSHIP COACH & AN EXPERT IN THE FUTURE OF WORK

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