



# 3 Vital Questions<sup>®</sup> for Work & Life

A strategic approach to creating engaged, innovative, and resilient workplaces by applying

***The Power of TED\****  
***(\*The Empowerment Dynamic)<sup>®</sup>***

David Emerald Womeldorff & Donna Zajonc, MCC

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## THE CHALLENGE AND CALL TO ACTION

“Less than one-third of U.S. workers were engaged in their jobs in 2014.” That is the first line in the recent Gallup survey on employee engagement. The actual figure is 31.5% and in many organizations it is far less. A bigger concern is that 51% are “not engaged” and 17% are “actively disengaged.”

How can companies innovate, create and gear-up for the fast pace of today’s work world when half of their workforce is not engaged? They can’t.

This may also explain the observation that between 70-85% of change efforts fail to produce their intended results, according to business researchers such as David Ulrich of the University of Michigan, as well as Gallup’s findings.

This disturbing data provides a recipe for workplaces that are rife with disenchantment, drama, and results that often fall short of the full potential of the organization, not to mention lost time, energy and opportunities. Technology has improved workforce productivity, but our social interacting, communicating and connecting has not evolved at the same pace.

Employee surveys often point to problems within the culture of the organization and the way people communicate and relate to one another. In response to these data, teams are reorganized only to discover that it didn’t make a sustainable difference in the way workers communicate and relate to one another. If the development process does not get at the core of the relationship dynamics, eventually the poor communication and employee dissatisfaction returns.

**“90% of leaders think an engagement strategy is important and will have an impact on (organizational) success, but barely 25% of them have a strategy.”**

<http://www.dailyinfographic.com/10-shocking-statistics-about-employee-engagement-infographic>

The investment and attention it takes to sustain high levels of employee engagement in these situations is challenging, at best, and often leads to burnout and disillusionment. **A structure and process that focuses on how workers connect with a common language and authenticity can help meet this challenge** and accurately and more precisely address the core reasons that drive employee disengagement.

Based upon the concepts in David Emerald’s book *The Power of TED\** (*\*The Empowerment Dynamic*), the **3 Vital Questions**® provides a methodology to reverse this trend and create a working environment that cultivates positive and engaged working relationships. In this brochure we have outlined the core framework contained in the **3 Vital Questions** and how your organization can achieve the creativity, innovation and engagement that everyone wants.

## THE PROMISE OF THE 3 VITAL QUESTIONS®

People want a chance to make progress together. Until there is a shared way of relating and taking action, this possibility is viewed as a distant concept. It is the interaction between human beings that matters. Something powerful is revealed in the work with the **3 Vital Questions** that forever enhances the way people work and engage with one another.

These questions create a context for ways of thinking, relating and taking action contained in *The Power of TED\** (*\*The Empowerment Dynamic*). As one executive exclaimed upon learning about the questions, “Shouldn’t we be asking these questions everyday!?”

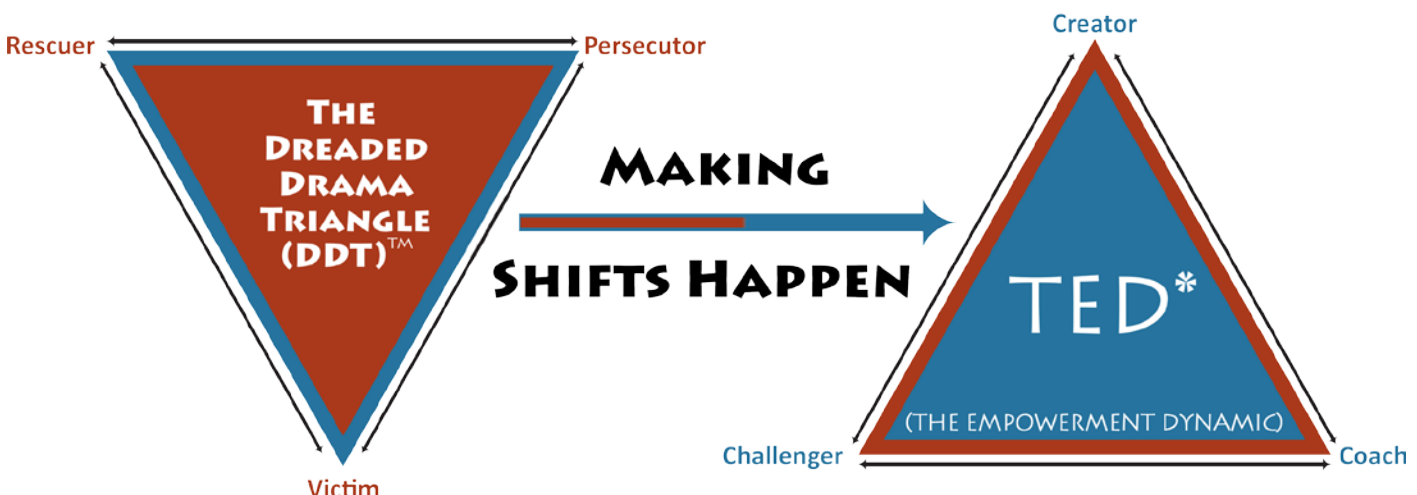
The following is a brief summary of the **3 Vital Questions**:

- 1. Where are you placing your focus? Do teams or individuals focus on reacting to problems or on creating outcomes/results?**

Human beings operate from two different mindsets or Orientations. The first—and predominant default—is the Problem Orientation. In this mindset, the focus is on the problems and issues that employees and the organization *don’t like* or *don’t want*, which then drives reactive behaviors that are less-than-sustainable. The second mindset is the Outcome Orientation where organizations, teams and individuals focus on outcomes they are passionate about—what they *do want* and *care about*. Such an Orientation leads to engagement, sustainable change and results. Understanding these two Orientations and how they act as human “operating systems” allows a deliberate “upgrade” to more resourceful and effective ways of working. This is the focus of the first Vital Question.

- 2. How are you relating to others and organizational realities? Does the way of relating for teams or organizations produce or perpetuate “drama” or do they empower others, teams and the organization to be more resourceful, resilient and innovative?**

If the focus is on problems and what they *don’t* like, employees’ ways of relating will tend to foster and perpetuate the Dreaded Drama Triangle (DDT)<sup>™</sup> and its interplay of the roles of Victim, Persecutor and Rescuer—all roles that cause workers to become disenchanted and disengaged.



When workers (and teams) live and work from the Problem Orientation, action-steps are normally reactions to the problems they face. They tend to react to whatever problem comes up in the moment, looking to complain or blame.

When they adopt an outcome focused Creator Orientation, the capacity of individuals, teams and the organization increases. They learn to relate through the roles of TED\* (\*The Empowerment Dynamic), which are the roles of Creator, Challenger and Coach. This results in new and engaging ways of communicating and relating to one another. Now passion and creativity fuel engagement.

### **3. What actions are you (and the organization or team) taking? Are actions merely reactions to the problems- of-the-day or are they generative in creating outcomes and results, while solving problems in service of the organization's mission and vision?**

When employees live and work from the Outcome (Creator) Orientation, and relate to others as Creators, Challengers and Coaches, the actions they take are small steps—Baby Steps—in service to what they want to create. The Dynamic Tension planning process is introduced in this third Vital Question as a structure for learning to take action that provides momentum toward moving closer to—and getting clearer about—envisioned and desired outcomes. They learn to tackle problems and choose their response to obstacles when they arise, while always keeping their focus on the outcomes.

## **RESULTS FOR ORGANIZATIONS**

When people feel empowered and engaged at work, they are more capable of addressing the issues that matter most and achieve a high level of desired results, including higher profitability, productivity and quality. Retention of employees is greatly increased in such environments because people WANT to work and contribute. Therefore, absenteeism, company theft and safety incidents decrease.

(Source: Gallup Business Journal; April 8, 2015; "Employees Want a Lot More from Their Managers;" Jim Harter and Amy Atkins.)

Organizations that have used the **3 Vital Questions** process have seen almost immediate changes in energy and passion throughout the workforce. Employees report enjoying their work and feeling more creative and resourceful and mutual respect and compassion becomes more present.

Additional results reported from the **3 Vital Questions** process includes:

- Deeper listening to each other in one-on-one and team meetings;
- A method for individuals and teams to focus on what they want to create, rather than reacting to the problem of the day and complaining about what they don't want or like;
- An easy-to-use, yet profound, structure that identifies team drama and, when it does appear, apply tools to work through and beyond the reactive thinking and patterns of relating;
- A common language for working together in more authentic and resourceful ways; and
- An increased spirit of creativity and conversations that matter.

People are heard saying: "Our ability to connect and engage comes from us. It is our responsibility. Not something that management or ownership does."

## FORMAT AND HOW IT WORKS

The **3 Vital Questions** process has several possible phases. Because each organization has a unique context and needs, a design team will evaluate the progress and next steps. The phases are:

1. Work begins with Executive Management to create the commitment to an engagement strategy and the deployment of **3 Vital Questions**.
2. Experiential training or on-line digital learning course (<http://learn.powerofted.com/3vq/>) for all staff and/or key stakeholders to understand the core concepts of the **3 Vital Questions** program;
3. Forming learning partners, where employees practice coaching and being coached using the training concepts;
4. Ongoing coordination with the original design team that is committed to ensuring that the frameworks are applied throughout the organization;
5. Providing 360-degree feedback to key leaders, utilizing The Leadership Circle Profile™. This powerful tool assesses one's creative and reactive tendencies and helps leaders reflect on how they have contributed to the current culture. The profile is beautifully aligned with the TED\* concepts and **3 Vital Questions** training.
6. Implementing executive alignment, designed to assist members of leadership teams to better conduct the critical, difficult and crucial conversations that they may not currently be having toward applying more of the core TED\* principles embedded in the **3 Vital Questions** structure;
7. Providing a “train the trainer” process for larger organizations, so that internal staff are trained in all components of the workshop and ready to lead ongoing future workshops.

## WHY IT WORKS

The **3 Vital Questions** process works by “upgrading the human operating system” used by individuals, teams and the organization; establishing shared language and common tools and processes; and equipping the organization with a simple—yet powerfully effective—action planning structure for creating outcomes. The end result: employees are more engaged, enthusiastic and bring their best to meeting the mission and purpose of the organization.

## GETTING STARTED

The **3 Vital Questions** program is custom-designed to meet the distinctive needs of each organization. One of the first steps is to conduct a needs assessment, using interviews and surveys, to determine the current state of employee engagement and readiness for change. The assessment provides the basis for the proposed process design and implementation.

A design team meets to outline the desired outcomes and purpose of the work. At this first and very important step, the team outlines what they hope, and believe, is possible for the organization and its workforce. With the assessments, survey data and the thoughtful reflection of the design team, a work plan is created that is novel and unique for their organization.



**David Emerald Womeldorff** is author of *The Power of TED\* (\*The Empowerment Dynamic)* and co-founder (along with Donna) of the Bainbridge Leadership Center. He has over 30 years of internal and external leadership & organization development consulting and experience.

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“Shouldn’t we be asking these 3 questions *every day*?”

– Doug Wood, CPA; Corporate Controller  
Luck Companies;  
Richmond, VA

“I haven’t found anything as perfect as the TED\* (3VQ) principles in creating...a framework for alignment of the people...around what matters most.”

– David Berg; Co-Founder/CEO, Arrowhead Health Centers & Chairman,  
Redirect Health  
Phoenix, AZ

“When practical advice meets profound, yet simple, explanations for human behavior, we can learn, change, and grow. TED\* does just this.”

– Annie McKee; Founder, Teleos Leadership Institute  
Co-Author, *Primal Leadership; Resonant Leadership*

“TED\* is an elegant framework which allows people to move beyond unproductive drama in their workplace and personal relationships. David and Donna are masterful in the presentation and facilitation of the material, making it accessible, relevant and practical for all.”

– Paul Wyman; (former) Director, PeopleDevelopment  
Children’s Hospital Colorado

“It has been, and continues to be, my absolute pleasure to work with the two of you. TED\* embodies everything I hold, and have learned to hold, dear and valuable... I am so pleased with what my team is building. It gives me hope for the future of government and public service.”

– Dave Stewart, Director of Human Resources  
Washington State Department of Health and Social Services