

PRAESTA

**Are
we
nearly
there
yet?**

Praesta Ireland
www.praesta.ie
Tel: (01) 2066724

“When setting out on a journey do not seek advice from someone who never left home.” Rumi

The challenge of our journey over the last year is that there has been no-one who has taken it before us. The second year of a global pandemic is new territory for us all.

New territories are, by definition, beyond our comfort zones. How has it been to be outside of yours?

When you are leading people, how you are matters a great deal. Your ‘how’ becomes the how of those around you.

When you are optimistic, strong in energy and feeling good about life, you lift your teams and colleagues.

Normal commercial life can challenge your energy, optimism and positivity, but the impact of a relentless pandemic raises that challenge to a new level.

As you bring your work this year to a close, consider the following three areas to cultivate your ‘how’.

Your Energy

“When your eyes are tired, the world is tired also.” David Whyte

Our minds and bodies work on an energy system of investments and withdrawals.

Investments are the sustaining elements of life. Quality food and sleep are vital short-term investments. Healthy exercise (which can feel like an energy withdrawal) is a vital long-term investment.

More subtle, but equally powerful and necessary energy investments, are good quality relationships which support us and keep us connected to ourselves and others.

Withdrawals are energy expended in working and living, thinking, getting things done and making things happen.

We can also unknowingly leave an energy tap running. These running taps are the hard conversations we don't have, the frustration we feel in a work relationship, the sadness we feel about a situation. We have had some of that this year.

Suggestion:

Take a page, head it up 'Energy', divide it down the centre with two headings of 'Investments' and 'Withdrawals'.

List what you are doing under each heading and pay particular attention to the emotional based activities, the taps that can be pouring energy in through relationships, fun, lightness in your life and those that can be draining it from you.

- *Is there an imbalance? If so, what would you like to do, and when will you do it?*
- *Do you need support to do it? If so, how, and when will you seek it?*

Your Listening

“Leaders who fail to listen ultimately find themselves surrounded by silence.” Adam Grant

You are expected to know the answers, to tell, explain, provide clarity, be decisive.

You move from one issue to the next, sorting, fixing, talking. It is your strength. Like many strengths, it can be over-used and so begin to take a toll.

Listening instead of speaking can feel uncomfortable, as though you are not delivering what people need, not adding value.

Listening takes time, time you feel could be better spent moving things forward. It is especially hard when someone is unsure what to do, and asking you for direction.

And yet...

Asking questions and being genuinely curious about the answers strengthens those around you.

Your confidence in their ability to find the right answers builds their capability and reduces their dependence on you.

Listening gives you thinking space, reflection space. It broadens your range.

Suggestion:

First be curious about your natural responses.

Notice your natural inclinations.

How often in a day do you ask a question before giving direction? When you ask a question, how long you wait to hear the answer before giving yours?

When your immediate inclination is to 'tell', use some of these questions at least once a day for a week:

- *'What's on your mind?' – a goldilocks question; not too broad, not too confining, kickstarts thinking.*
- *'And what else?' - the AWE question; often leads to fresh thinking.*
- *'What's the real challenge here for you?' – the focus question; helps clarify.*

When you have practiced for a week, try it for another.

Your Kindness

“Simple kindness may be the most vital key to the riddle of how human beings can live with each other in peace, and care properly for this planet we all share.” Bo Lozoff

Kindness is a soft word. A soft concept with a powerful impact.

Doing something kind increases your sense of well-being almost instantaneously. A remarkable process, delivering benefit to giver and receiver.

The extending and receiving of kindness strengthen connection and raise energy.

Extending kindness to yourself strengthens your positivity and raises your motivation.

You and your teams have been separated and fragmented through remote working. The benefits of giving and receiving simple kindnesses of noticing when someone needs help, space to talk something out, or even just a ‘how are you?’ have been lost.

Finding ways to offer kindness to yourself and others will boost your energy and optimism.

Suggestion:

Start with yourself:

- *What would be a genuinely kind thing to do for yourself today? Do it.*
- *What would be a genuinely kind thing to do for yourself tomorrow? Do it.*

Move to others:

- *What is one kind thing you could do for someone on your team? Do it.*
- *What is one kind thing you could do for someone outside of work? Do it.*

When you have taken these actions, consider how you can consciously make this an ongoing practice for yourself and for your team.

End on a High

The edited sum of our memories becomes our view of how good our life is. When we think back, we edit memories to two points of time, firstly to the most intense moment (high or low) and then to the how it finished, the end moment.

Even if the intense time was negative, we feel a lot better if the end is better. It means that if you focus on a positive ending, you can influence how you are with an overall experience, such as a meeting or day... or twenty months of a global pandemic.

As the year closes, actively recall the good things that happened for you during it, and the good things in your life now.

Bring your team’s attention to all the good things they have achieved, and the good things that are happening now.

Use your positive energy, your listening skills, and your kindness to end your year on a high.



Suggested reading:

Seven And A Half Lessons About The Brain by Lisa Feldman Barrett (2021)

The Coaching Habit by Michael Bungay Stanier (2016)

How To Have A Good Day by Caroline Webb (2017)