

# How to Cultivate the Consultant Mindset and Become a Value Detective

*By David Lee*

1. Your value as an employee—wherever you go—is directly related to your understanding of your “customer’s” needs, problems, and goals and your ability to help them get their needs met, solve their problems, and achieve their goals.

“Value, just like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder.”

2. Imagine you were an independent contractor who ONLY got paid, and ONLY kept your engagement, if you produced ongoing result your clients—i.e. your supervisor and employer. What would you do differently than what you’re doing now?
  - Ask yourself: “Am I earning their business?”
  - Ask yourself: “How can I be even MORE valuable to them?”
3. Being a Value Detective means asking: “What opportunities are here for me to provide more value?”

## **Things You Want to Know about Your Employer So You Can Provide the Greatest Value**

1. Mission and Vision
2. Brand Promise
3. Sources of Competitive Advantage
4. Marketplace Challenges
5. Internal Challenges
6. How the Different Departments Fit Together and Affect Each Other
7. Key Initiatives
8. Factors That Affect Profitability (or Viability if Not-For-Profit)

## **Things You Want to Know About Your Supervisor and Your Department, Division, or Team**

1. How Specifically Your Department, Division, or Team's Deliverables and Performance Affect Your Internal Customers, External Customers, and Your Employer's Ability to Thrive
2. What Problems and Opportunities Your Supervisor Is Most Focused On
3. Your Supervisor's Goals
4. Which Tasks Drains Your Supervisor's Energy and/or Weaknesses That Are Your Strengths, So That You Could Take These On

## **Things You Want to Know About Yourself and Your Position**

1. Which Behaviors On Your Part Help Make Your Supervisor's Job As Easy As Possible For Them
2. Which Activities and Behaviors On Your Part Provide the Most Value to Your Supervisor
3. Which Activities and Behaviors On Your Part Provide the Most Value to Your Employer
4. Problems You Can Help Solve or Opportunities You Can Help Discover (these come out of knowing answers to questions in the first two sections).

## **Exercise**

1. What are some of the things your supervisor and/or department head most want to accomplish or goals they want to achieve?

2. What problems do they most want to solve?

3. What might you do to help them with these?

4. What questions could you ask them to help you help them?

## Examples of Questions to Ask Your Supervisor

1. "One of the things we talked about in that Emerging Leaders seminar was how to make sure we provide the most value possible to our supervisor and employer, and as part of that goal...to make sure we understand what's most important to our supervisor and employer...so with that in mind... can we set up a time in the near future for me to ask you some questions to make sure I understand the Big Picture and how to make the best contribution possible?"
2. "I want to make sure I understand your goals, what's most important to you, what problems you're focusing on, etc. so I know how to be most helpful...can I tell you what I think those are and you can let me know if I'm on track?" You can just ask them questions like "What are your goals for our department?", "What are the biggest challenges we face?", and "What would you like to see more out of our team?". However, by sharing with your supervisor what you think these are, it helps them recognize you've given it thought and do have some awareness of the Big Picture.

## Other Practices That Help You Increase Your Value

1. “Take a mentor out to lunch” or similar outreach (note: Do NOT say “I’d like to pick your brain.”) Have questions you want to ask them ready to go.
2. Ask leaders in your field if they would be willing to spend 15-20 minutes on the phone, and then ask them the questions you are most interested in getting the answers to. Make sure you follow up with a thank you note.
3. Network with people outside your field. Many, if not most of the great ideas in business (and even in science) have come from outsiders. What is “business as usual” in one field is often “rocket science” in another. For instance, the healthcare industry has borrowed heavily from the hospitality industry for ideas on how to create more welcoming and pleasant patient experiences.
4. Learn to ask better questions. A great book on this is *Power Questions: Build Relationships, Win New Business, and Influence Others* by Andrew Sobel and Jerold Panas
5. Be a learning machine. Listen to podcasts, watch videos, read books, both inside and outside of your field.

## **About the Emerging Leader Program**

This program is for employers who understand that one of the keys to attracting A-List talent, and keeping them, is to provide employees with ongoing opportunities to grow professionally.

It is also for employers who are interested in developing their leadership pipeline.

The one-day public seminar is Version 1.0 of what will be a year-long professional development program offered in-house to employers.

## **About David Lee**

David Lee, the founder of HumanNature@Work, works with employers who want to improve employee engagement, productivity, and customer service. He has worked with organizations and presented at conferences both domestically and abroad.

An internationally recognized thought leader in the field of employee engagement and performance, he is the author of nearly 100 articles and book chapters that have been published in trade journals and books in the US, Europe, India, Australia, and China. The second edition of the business classic, *The Talent Management Handbook*, features a chapter of his about the topic of Onboarding. The upcoming third edition contains a chapter of his on using storytelling onboarding and employee engagement

In addition to his research and work with both struggling and “best in class” organizations, David Lee’s work draws from a wide range of scientific disciplines including cognitive neuroscience, anthropology, psychoneuroimmunology, trauma and resilience research, and paleopsychology.

Taking this research which typically doesn't find its way into the business world, David translates these principles of human nature into practical leadership and managerial strategies that optimize employee performance.

To capture the impact understanding human nature makes, David borrows from the popular TV show *The Dog Whisperer*, and explains "Understanding human nature helps you become a People Whisperer, and by doing so, dramatically improves your ability to get the best results from others (and yourself)."

Recently, his work on what makes organizations resilient and employees perform at their best has focused on the central role productive relationships and productive conversations have on these outcomes, with this being the take away message:

"Every better business result you want requires having a better conversation."

### **Other Programs by David Lee**

Bring It On!: How to Stress Less to Unleash Your Best

Constructive Feedback: How to Give It So They Hear It... and Want to Use It

From ME to WE: How to Foster a "We're all in this together" Culture

Generations at Work: How to Foster Greater Understanding and Communication among the Different Generations

How to Use Storytelling to Become a More Fascinating, Persuasive, and Memorable Communicator

Inspiring You: How to Bring You're A-Game to Work and Inspire Others to Do the Same

Now I Know Why They're Acting That Way!: How to Understand and Work With People Who Have Different Personality Styles

The Busy Manager's Guide to Keeping Employee Morale High... and Stress Low



## Comments from Clients and Program Participants

“The value David provided our organization went far beyond the actual classroom experience. In addition to the wealth of information he provided during class, David provided a broad support system to further the development of our senior management team.

Specific elements included working with the team to articulate a behavioral vision, one-on-one coaching, individualized professional development plans, and a variety of other support services that enabled us to build a culture of teamwork, accountability, and excellent customer service. While everyone says they will help you be more productive and get better results from your people, David is the only one I’ve worked with who really helps you get there.” - *Eric Henry, CEO and CIO at Hershey Trust Company*

“I recently attended a meeting at which David Lee spoke about employee engagement and retention, and could not have been more impressed by his enthusiasm, subject matter expertise and ability to draw the audience into his topic.

He is truly passionate about what he does, and it shows in his ability to engage participants across different levels of an organization, which made his seminar extend far beyond the bounds of a traditional presentation.

He is a fantastic listener and is attuned to the interests and issues faced by his audience, quickly shifting gears to address individuals while still holding the attention of the larger group – no small task! His break-out sessions were also terrific; well executed and thoughtful, without seeming like run of the mill icebreakers. I could not recommend him more for a fun, innovative approach to employee onboarding and engagement!” – *Sarah Canapari, Human Resources Generalist at Nixon Peabody LLP, MA*

“David is a consummate speaker, presenter, storyteller and, if ever there existed such a thing, a true ‘people whisperer’. I recently invested a vacation day off from work, to attend David’s presentation, *Bring it On – How to Create a Resilient, Adaptable Workforce with a Can Do Spirit*. David’s presentation was simply amazing, exceptional in practical content and useful take-aways, tools, and promised and delivered follow-up. I first met David at an HRASM meeting some years ago, and since then have had the good fortune to be the beneficiary of his wisdom as a client, and to attend, whenever and wherever I possibly can, his topical, relevant, informed, and evidence-based presentations. Kudos David on keeping it fresh, vital, and always highly relevant!” – *Susan Soto, Woodfords Family Services, ME*

“David Lee’s presentation at the 2016 SHRM Conference *Why Your Employee Engagement Survey Doesn’t Cut It: It’s Time to Customize the Employee Experience*, was one of the best of the conference. I especially liked his ‘Help me, help you, help us’ approach to managers having engagement-building conversations with employees. Also, the fact that it was spiced up with up-to-date research and examples from the field made it both interesting and useful. Altogether, his presentation gave me a lot of valuable insights that I can use. I would definitely

recommend Mr. Lee to any organization who wishes to keep learning HOW TO GROW THEIR PEOPLE.” – *Naftali Tooly Ungar, founder, ZeOved, Israel*

“Your program on Constructive Conversations was THE most memorable seminar I’ve ever attended, and I’ve been to a lot of training and a lot of school. It amazed me how you engaged the audience for four hours without PowerPoint.” – *Ingrid Lederman, DDJ Capital Management, LLC, Waltham, MA*

“I saw David speak for the first time on employee engagement at the 2016 SHRM conference. It was one of the highlights of the conference for me, so I reached out to him to see if he could speak at the HR networking group I am president of (Association of Legal HR Managers). Once again, David did an outstanding job, and our group was very impressed with his presentation.” – *Rachel Thater, Burns & Levinson LLP, Boston, MA*

“It’s an educational privilege and pleasure to learn from David Lee! When he’s presenting to audiences large and small his insights about workplace dynamics, leadership, and striving for our personal best resonate with everyone. David provides invaluable aha moments that translate into actionable takeaways. He always exceeds expectations, leaving participants wanting more. Equally impressive are David’s small group and team facilitation skills. Having participated in several of David’s sessions with my C-suite colleagues, I’ve witnessed David’s strong listening skills and ability to synthesize information and appropriately direct (and re-direct) conversations. Because he has the ability to build trust and rapport quickly, it affords him the necessary gateway for a deep dive into pertinent issues. His presence and unique coaching style lead to worthwhile learning for everyone. Five stars for David Lee!” – *Lisa Drew McIlwain, MaineHealth, Portland, ME*

“David is an exceptional human being. I first met him in 2011, and I’ve been impressed ever since with his well-honed listening skills and the depth of his caring about others. These qualities make him a rarity among coaches, consultants and speakers. One of his greatest skills is his ability to facilitate better conversations between individuals in the workplace. His style is collaborative and warm. He draws people in and establishes trust quickly because they can instantly sense his authenticity. I love that his company is called “Human Nature@Work” because he truly understands humans and the type of leadership required to engage them and bring out their best efforts. David is a true professional and a joy to work with. I give him my highest recommendation!” – *Meredith Bell, Performance Support Systems, Yorktown, VA*

