

## Why 'How are you feeling' matters more than 'How are you?'



TOI+ Expert Speak



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*In the post-pandemic workspace, managers are being taught that it's not enough to talk with their teams, they need to connect on a more emotional level*

When the question is: “How are you?” the answer is almost always a robotic: “I’m fine, thank you.” Both the person asking and the person answering are clearly not paying attention to each other. But if the question is: “How are you feeling?” the answer is probably going to be more thoughtful. This is precisely the difference organisations want their managers to be aware of.

“A lot of times, people talk about what they are thinking. It’s different from what they are feeling. Feeling could be as simple as, after having a conversation, I felt disappointed; or I felt excited. So, a conscious effort is made here to shift the conversation from ‘think’ to ‘feel’,” says Sumit Sabharwal, vice-president - human resources, Fujitsu Global Delivery Centers.

He’s referring to a workshop that his company organised, where the conversation was not around competencies or scores, but more about how to gauge employees’ engagement. And a lot could come from a simple ‘How do you feel?’ question.



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**Manish Mandan, group head - HR, SLCM Group**

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Sabharwal says some members of the leadership team as well as managers attended semi-structured human labs where they “learned to talk the language of feeling and not in the language of thinking, which helped them understand how ‘human process’ works”.

Sabharwal says even managers on the verge of burnout are appreciative about such conversations and workshops. It's something that's repeated across

organisations – that conversations and emotions are as important as productivity and results.

**The importance of EQ**

In the post-pandemic world, the often used ‘cut-to-the-chase-get-to-the-point’ kind of culture is fast diminishing. What’s being appreciated are heart-to-heart talks.

Manish Mandan, group head - HR, SLCM Group, which offers technology-driven warehousing services for agriculture commodities, says that HR is becoming any organisation’s most valued asset, “and it becomes more imperative to have a social and human connect with this asset in the workplace environment as they can ‘think and feel’.”



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Mandan explains: During the second phase of the pandemic, when the company reached out to the families of its employees for any help that could be extended, routine employee calls, distribution of amenities and enquiries for medical help made a huge impact and brought about a higher EQ among employees.

“This needs to be approached as a scientific and perpetual process administered by people managers in an organisation. More focus on ‘what’ and ‘who’ rather than ‘how’ and ‘why’ should be the approach and the way one approaches a situation is perceived as a behaviour perception,” says Mandan.

#### **[WFH IS BRINGING MORE WOMEN INTO TECH](#)**

#### **Dialogue matters**

Avery Dennison India implemented a two-way conversation between employees and health experts to ensure a healthier lifestyle, especially during the pandemic. A two-way conversation and feedback was also carried out during internal conversations such as town halls and meetings.

Manvi Sushil, director - HR, Avery Dennison India, says: “We promoted virtual celebration and tea talks between employees and leaders in order to keep them more rooted. Our leadership team made sure to go all out and encourage our employees not just by words but by actions.”

It’s not just the pandemic that has created this need for engagement. Biswarup Goswami, chief HR officer, GHCL, says deeper conversations have been taking place for the past 2-3 years. But, he agrees, the pandemic and the hybrid workplace have underlined the need for two-way insightful conversations.





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## Different people have different frequencies at which they operate. Two people best communicate only when their frequencies of operation match

**Vinaya Bansal**, co-founder, The Predictive Strategy Group

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It's important to understand what people are feeling, because this helps managers understand how they operate. Based on insights he captured during the course of his work in the field of human behaviours, Vinaya Bansal, co-founder, The Predictive Strategy Group, has an interesting theory, that humans are like radio stations. |

“Different people have different frequencies at which they operate. Two people best communicate only when their frequencies of operation match,” he says. What does that mean? Bansal explains with an example. If a detail-oriented, reserved person is talking, she will be formal, to the point, and factual. If she is talking to an informal extroverted personality, chances are he will think the conversation is devoid of energy and emotion. He may feel that the speaker is ignoring him or even being rude to him. But if the presentation or talk is being made to another reserved, detail-oriented person, he would feel that the communication is professional, no-nonsense and sincere.





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“What we need in organisations is to understand this fact, because this is the mistake they keep making and then wondering why communication is not happening or there is so much miscommunication within teams. Only when they will objectively understand the frequency of each individual and then package the communication accordingly, the song will play else only noise will exist as usual,” says Bansal.

Well, that’s easier said than done, especially as the world moves into a hybrid way of working, which could lead to a different kind of chaos to deal with. But, as they say, it’s never too late to start somewhere.