

# The Approachability PLAYBOOK



## Approachable Leadership<sup>®</sup> Tool Kit

Enclosed are ready-to-use templates of the 6 tools found in [The Approachability Playbook](#) plus 3 bonus tools (including our “one-on-one” agenda and our “3 questions” guide).

Also, check out our FREE webinar *3 “Silent Killers” Ruining Your Business (PLUS 3 Leadership “Hacks” to Fix Them)*. Seating is limited, so sign up right away at [DrainYourSwamp.com](http://DrainYourSwamp.com)

We hope you enjoy these tools. Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions for improvement. Let us know how you use the tools in your own leadership journey. Thank you!

## CHECKING IN

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### Tool in Brief

- **Physical Gaps** physical avoidance behavior can suggest a gap
- **Verbal Gaps** mitigated or indirect speech may express power distance
- **Behavioral Gaps** many times actions speak louder than words – watch for gaps between what someone says and what they do

## TOOL IN PRACTICE

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**Use the tool to recognize signals of power distance. When you notice one use the discussion starters to help shrink the gap.**

### Physical Gaps

- Physical distance, turned toward an “exit”
- Avoiding eye contact, looking at ceiling
- Closed body language (arms crossed)
- Distracted, seems lost in thought
- Holding back or agitated body language

### Behavioral Gaps

- Promising one thing, doing another
- No follow through or follow up
- Passive aggressive actions
- Being “too busy” or procrastinating
- “Changing mind” about importance of issue

### Verbal Gaps... These are the most recognizable signals of power distance

- Watch for mitigated speech like **hints** (“I wonder if...”); **preference** (“perhaps we should...”); **question** (“do you think \_\_\_ would work?”); or **team suggestion** (“why don’t we try \_\_\_?”)
- Look for attempts to “sugarcoat” or downplay bad news
- Being overly polite or deferential
- Quickly deferring, backing down when rejected by someone in power

### Discussion Starters... Once you notice a gap, try this to close it

“You seem uncomfortable. It’s OK – I really want to know what you think.”

“I’m not 100% sure what I think about this myself. Tell me what you really think.”

“OK, that’s what I do [name behavior] when I’m not sure if I should say something. What’s up?”

“I need your help. Can you be honest and tell me exactly what you think about this?”

“I may be completely off base here, I don’t know. Can you tell me what you really think?”

Many are slow to trust people in power. This creates a “power distance gap.” Approachable leaders use the *Approachability Window Tool* to shrink the gap.

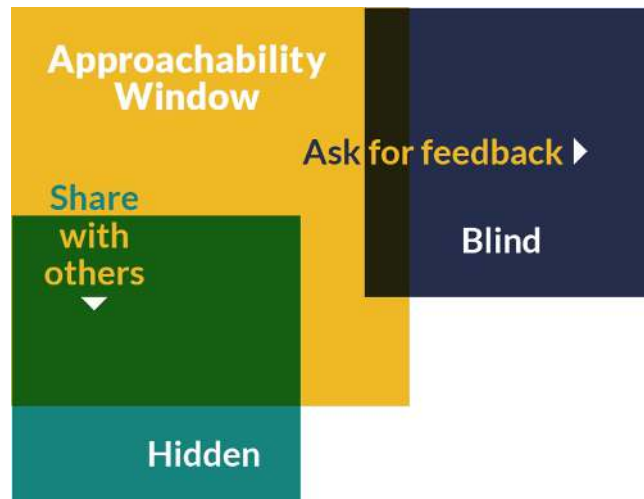
## Approachability Window Tool

### CHECKING IN

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#### Tool in Brief Approachability Window

The goal of this tool is to improve relationships by revealing more about yourself and seeking feedback. When you don’t seek feedback you create blind spots. When you don’t share with others, you close them out. This may cause them to withdraw.



### TOOL IN PRACTICE

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#### Tips to Encourage Feedback

1. **Encourage feedback.** Sincerely ask for input.
2. **Stop/Start.** What should I start doing? What should I stop doing?
3. **Stress the value of the feedback.** Why is it important? Why is this person uniquely able to provide it?
4. **LISTEN!** Use our *Active Listening Tool* to make sure you do a good job of listening. This by itself encourages feedback.
5. **Don't be defensive!** Accept the feedback, be open-minded and reflect on it. Thank them – it's a gift!

#### Tips to Grow Relationships

1. **Take your time** – sharing too much too soon can be worse than not sharing. Go slow.
2. **Ask questions.** Don't interrogate but show interest and learn as much as you can.
3. When you share with someone **mention the relationship** – “I don't tell everyone this, but we are close so I'll tell you...”
4. **Be empathetic** (don't one-up, offer unsolicited advice, etc.) Use our *Empathy Toolkit*.
5. **Don't share secrets.**
6. **Acknowledge and appreciate** if they reveal something new.

The first cornerstone of Approachable Leadership® is to be welcoming and create the right space. This tool provides practical tips on how to be available, warm and present.

### CHECKING IN

#### Right Space is created by:

- Physical Space
- Availability
- Warmth
- Presence

### The Connection Model



### TOOL IN PRACTICE

**Use the tool to identify opportunities to improve your physical space, your behavior, your availability and your presence.**

#### Physical Space

- Is the physical space inviting and warm?
- Comfortable place to sit?
- No obstacles between (same side of desk)?
- Personal objects or discussion starters?
- Is it quiet? Can it be private?
- Is there a reason to visit? Food works great - so do games.

#### Availability

- Available to meet when needed?
- Do you block scheduled "drop in" time?
- Convenient way to schedule time on your calendar?
- Do you allow interruptions for emergency situations?
- Do you "advertise" ways to meet with you?

#### Warmth

- Are you welcoming and neighborly?
- Are you smiling? Remember you smile with your eyes.
- Have you asked open-ended questions?
- Are you doing more than half the talking? Shut up.
- How are they feeling? Are they comfortable?
- What do they need?

#### Presence

- Full stop. Give full attention.
- Put away your phone, close your laptop. No distractions.
- Close your door or signal to others that you are in a meeting.
- Listen actively. Don't try to think of what you'll say next.
- Summarize what you've heard and confirm understanding.
- No problem solving till asked.

A cornerstone habit of Approachable Leadership® is active listening. Without this skill there is no way to achieve understanding. This tool provides practical tips on how to improve your active listening skills.

### CHECKING IN

- Active Listening:**
- Pay Attention
  - Listening Behavior
  - Feedback
  - No Judgment
  - Respond

### The Connection Model



### TOOL IN PRACTICE

Use the tool to identify opportunities to improve your active listening skills.



CHECKING IN

**Tool in Brief** Empathy is the opposite of sympathy. Here is how to express it:



TOOL IN PRACTICE

**Use the tool to use the Stop, Listen, Confirm, + Collaborate model.**

**Stop.** Give your attention, full stop.

- Put away your phone, close your laptop
- Remove any distractions
- If you can't pay attention reschedule
- Block uninterrupted time to meet
- Close your door – ask for privacy

**Listen.** Use active listening skills.

- Show speaker you are listening
- Provide feedback (summarize, reflect)
- No judgment, encourage more
- Respond appropriately (validate, restate)
- Focus on them – not what you will say next

**Confirm.** Make sure you understand the situation and the feeling.

- “You feel \_\_\_\_\_ because of \_\_\_\_\_. Do I have that right?”
- Give them space to correct your interpretation
- Remain in Gestalt mindset – don't give answers or advice
- Sit with that feeling you just described, think about a time you felt the same way
- Make sure you have confirmed understanding before moving to the next step

**Collaborate.** If you are asked, use solution-focused questions to find an answer.

**Avoid problem-focused questions.**

1. What's wrong?
2. Why do you have this problem?
3. Whose fault is it?
4. How long has this been going on?
5. What is this costing you?
6. Why haven't you overcome this problem?

**Ask solution-focused ones instead.**

1. What result do we really want?
2. When can we start?
3. What do we need to get started?
4. What resources are available?
5. Who can help?
6. What can we start now?

The essential habit of support happens with good follow up and follow through. Lack of follow through destroys trust and credibility. Here are some practical tips to improve your follow up and follow through.

### CHECKING IN

Follow-Up and Follow-Through:  
Rules  
Tools  
Habits  
Environment

### The Connection Model



### TOOL IN PRACTICE

## These are the 6 Key Areas for Follow Up and Follow Through.



Learn numerous other follow-up and follow-through ideas in *The Approachability Playbook* (ALplaybook.com)

### Follow-Up Rules to Experiment with:

- Clean up your workspace each day before you leave.
- List your top three to-do items before you leave.
- Empty your in-boxes (physical and virtual) each day and add follow-up items to your to-do list.
- Limit your in-boxes (one physical and one virtual in-box).
- Don't turn on your computer or tablet until you have taken a walk through the work area.
- Only check email at certain times each day.
- Arrive 30 minutes before your team to prepare for day.
- Make follow-up an agenda item for all meetings.
- Follow through on one to-do item before you wake up your computer each time you sit at your desk.
- Add follow-up to your morning or evening routine.

### Supportive Environment Tools to Experiment with:

- Use an obvious, physical in-box where people know they can put items they want you to see.
- Use an "Always Around" in-box where you can capture follow-up items (a notebook, notecards, or a phone app are the most common).
- Use a "dictation" app so to-do items can be captured by voice (Siri® can add items to your reminders list or a document by just speaking them into your phone).
- Consider using a "location-aware" to-do app, that can remind you to take an action when you are in a certain location (like picking up a form when you are at the corporate office).
- Use a whiteboard to put your key to-do items, follow-up items, or issue-tracking system.
- Share an Excel® spreadsheet with your team so they can see progress on open items and when items close.



## “Walk a Mile” Tool

People often behave differently than we expect. Our unconscious biases attempt to explain behavior we don't understand in our own terms, and we must fight this tendency.

### CHECKING IN

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#### Tool in Brief

- **Report** what you observed – **FACTS ONLY**
- **Walk a Mile** consider different perspectives; “Nobody thinks they are the villain.”
- **Confirm** discuss and validate your interpretation with the other person; assume positive intent; “You feel \_\_\_\_ because of \_\_\_\_\_. Do I have that right?”

### TOOL IN PRACTICE

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**Use the Report/Walk a Mile/Confirm prompts below and complete with as much detail as you can. Use the back side if needed.**

**Report the Facts:** Describe FACTS not motive or feelings; remain neutral and exact

#### Key Questions

What happened first, second, third?  
Who was involved?  
Exactly what did you observe?  
How did each person behave?  
Did anyone else observe what happened?

**Walk a Mile:** Consider other perspectives; attribute positive motive to those involved.

#### Key Questions

What different ways explain the behavior?  
What assumptions am I making?  
What is the best possible reason it happened?  
How would I feel if I was in their shoes?  
What if this was your wife, child, or parent?

**Confirm understanding:** Validate feelings; reconcile perspectives; assume positive intent

#### Key Questions

How do I think they are feeling?  
Why do I think they feel that way?  
Is this the best possible explanation?  
Have I confirmed their feelings?  
Have I missed anything?



## The 3 Questions Tool

During the Workshop we learn the 3 Questions of Approachable Leaders. Those are a starting point. This tool helps you adapt the 3 Questions to your workplace.

### CHECKING IN



### The Three Questions (and their assumptions)

- Do you have what you need?** *Nobody wakes up hoping to do a crappy job.*
- What would make work better?** *My job as a leader is to reduce friction.*
- Where are you going?** *People want to make progress.*

### TOOL IN PRACTICE

#### Do you have what you need?

**Other ways to ask:**

- Anything I can do for you?
- You need anything?
- Everything good?
- You're crushing it today!
- How am I doing?

*This is the resource question. Can you ask it in a way that is suitable to your workplace?*

**How else can you ask?**

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#### What would make work better?

**Other ways to ask:**

- Anything in your way?
- What's your best new idea?
- Can you think of a better way?
- What would you change?
- Anything new?

*This is the innovation question. Can you ask it in a way that is suitable to your workplace?*

**How else can you ask?**

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#### Where are you going?

**Other ways to ask:**

- You learning anything new?
- What's your next move?
- Applying for a promotion?
- What are you proud of?
- Any new "highlight reel" work?

*This is the progress question. Can you ask it in a way that is suitable to your workplace?*

**How else can you ask?**

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## One on One Guide

### One on One Agenda

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

CHECKING IN \_\_\_\_\_

### How are you doing?



I'm great!

Doing good

Could be better

Not good

### How are you doing since we last talked?

What went well?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any challenges?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

WHERE ARE WE GOING? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Your Needs

What do you need?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What would make work better?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where are you going?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### How Can I Help?

What do you need from me?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How can I make work better?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How can I help you get where you're going?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### What do you want to work on over the next 30 days?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Recognize Approachability Tool

### CHECKING IN

#### The Connection Model



### TOOL IN PRACTICE

#### Right Space

- Physical space: Welcoming? Inviting? Open door? Comfortable place to sit?
- Warmth: Genuinely glad? Appropriate touch? Eye contact? Body language?
- Availability: Make time to meet? Walk around to others' space? Keep appointments?
- Present: Limit distractions? Single tasking? Sole focus on the individual?

#### Right Feeling

- Stop: Full stop. Eliminate distractions. Reschedule if not able to give complete attention.
- Listen: Use *Active Listening Tool*. Show you are listening, provide nonjudgmental feedback.
- Confirm understanding: You feel [emotion] because of [reason]. Do I have that right?
- Gestalt mindset: Empathy. No advice. Share experience of similar emotion (don't "one-up").

#### Right Action

- Solution-focused questions: How do we solve? Who can help? What's our goal?
- Follow up tool: Use *Right Action Tool*. Inbox always with you. Routinely empty. Schedule.
- Follow up rule: Touch only once. Do it now. Return calls and emails on schedule.
- Get help: Accountability partner. Reminder if not back when promised.