

AWARE|LEADER
HANDBOOK #1

BECOMING AWARE OF ELEPHANTS

How to develop greater
business awareness & make the
changes that make the difference



BARB HAMMER

**For the love of business and the
people that get the work done.**

About the Author



Barb Hammer is a culture specialist on a mission—helping organizational leaders grow business and revenue by becoming great places to work. As a CEO, entrepreneur and speaker, she travels across the country spreading her message: engaged workplaces make great business sense. And, awareness in business is where it all begins. Creating strong, healthy, profitable organizations through conscious leadership, aligned purpose, inspired engagement and true commitment are all products of greater awareness. Her company, Momentum, offers business leaders the tools, guidance and support

to create their own strong and vital workplaces.

Entering into the professional world at age 13, she found herself captivated by the inner-workings of business. To this day Barb is enthralled by the opportunity to shape business success. Her many decades of experience in companies both large and small have provided observation, action and insight into what makes leadership most effective. She has witnessed firsthand what motivates people to strive for excellence and what leads people to disengage.

Barb adamantly believes that every company can have the opportunity to benefit from engaged and happy employees. Her focus on people and process helps businesses grow. She is committed to educating her clients about practical ways to enhance the workplace and generate revenue. When she isn't contemplating how to inspire performance and grow companies, she enjoys biking and boating, lakes and oceans, music and traveling.

Table of Contents

An Introduction	5
Why Awareness	6
Becoming Aware of Elephants	8
6 Performance Elephants	10
4 Communication Elephants	15
Becoming An Aware Leader	18

An Introduction

I love business. I love the challenge of it, the fulfillment it provides, the creativity it invites, and the courage and commitment it requires to keep everything moving forward. I love the way it will not let me coast or play it safe for very long. And, the way it entreats me to be a learner and a curious student—always. Growing a strong, healthy, financially abundant business is without a doubt, an extraordinary adventure.

Even as I relish being a business owner today, I deeply appreciate the experience and knowledge I received from the companies for which I worked. They were, for me, the greatest business education I could have asked for. As dynamic laboratories and active classrooms, they provided me a remarkable opportunity to witness how things actually unfold within a company. Not a study in theory, but one in reality.

What I came to realize most clearly, through my multi-decade training program, was that most companies don't really understand human behavior—what makes people tick, how to inspire them to be and do their best, how to enlist their contribution and allegiance. They understand process and data, metrics and technology...but people, not so much.

I believe this lack of “people” understanding is the cause of many of our organizational maladies. It's the thing that thwarts working relationships, performance, productivity, loyalty, innovation and achievement. It's recognized in the lament echoed by scores of business leaders and managers...“How do we effectively handle our people?”



A Core Beliefs and Culture study by Deloitte indicates that 68% of employees and 66% of executives agree that companies do not do enough to instill a sense of purpose and impact into their company culture.

Whether we are able to articulate it or not, each of us understands what inspires us to move into action and excel. Or, conversely, what causes us to freeze or engage in some other form of resistance. We intuitively know what works and what doesn't.

Though each of us is unique, we are nearly all inspired and influenced by the same fundamental elements. Elements such as being valued and heard, having a sense of purpose, establishing one's own goals, belonging and contributing to the whole, receiving support and feedback, experiencing fulfillment and growth. In other words, being human.

The companies that invite humanity in their doors will be inviting so much more. For it's in that humanity where the real magic is found—the energy, the dedication, the inspiration, the commitment, the courage, the creativity—not coincidentally, the very same qualities that fuel business growth and success.

Why awareness?

As a business leader, you know the world of business is a world unto itself—multi-faceted, dynamic, unpredictable, fragile, resilient, at times outrageously satisfying, at times challenging beyond words. It possesses both contradiction and consistency, requires intellect and intuition, and demands attention...always.



For leaders intent on building a company that's strong and sustainable, the need for vigilant attention is an ongoing imperative.

However, a lack of thoughtful attention is not always recognizable in oneself or in others. With all the busyness and activity happening in business today, many of us can be high functioning and yet inattentive to some of the most critical issues lurking just below the surface. That is why attention needs to be intentional. Without it, “business as usual” can amble along for years, silently and steadily allowing the “unseen” issues to weaken the company, the culture and its financial future.

So what does this word **attention** mean?

Here’s how Merriam-Webster defines it:

- the act or power of carefully thinking about, listening to, or watching someone or something
- the act or state of applying the mind to something
- consideration with a view to action
- notice, interest or awareness

In essence, paying attention is developing awareness.

This handbook is all about helping business leaders and business people develop a more broad, clear and focused business awareness. Here’s why. The quality and health of the relationships and processes that make up an organization directly impact the productivity and financial strength of the business. Period.

By developing business awareness and becoming clear about what’s really going on within the organization, the opportunity for better options is born. There is choice.

Awareness is infinite...this handbook is not. It is, however, a place to start or support a developing awareness in your business. It is intended to be of service to you and your company. If it resonates, there’s more. We provide webinars, Q + A sessions, email inquiries, tips, recommendations and “Needs Discovery” conversations. You’re invited to participate as you choose.

Becoming Aware of Elephants

“What’s that elephant doing in your office?”

OK, it’s not really an elephant, but it can be that big and powerful. The elephant I’m referring to isn’t an animal at all, but rather the unseen, unacknowledged or untended obstacles and issues that exist within a company. No one wants to look at the elephant—they defer their eyes, they move gingerly around it, they pretend it isn’t there. But, when left unattended, elephants can stand around forever...and do.

There are all sorts of elephants that plague organizations. One of the most challenging and frustrating concerns people and performance. The truth is, this area has been slow to evolve within the business environment. Advancements have been made, but we’re still wandering around with regard to our ability to consciously inspire performance and potential in people. That’s a big elephant.

Other elephants include leadership that’s unclear, faulty communication practices, disabling relationships and processes that are ineffective or cumbersome. If it’s unknown, unattended to and creating resistance to forward movement, it’s an elephant.



***My work is about taking a deep breath, courageously
looking at the elephant and sending it on its way.
Nothing against elephants, it’s just that they have
no place in a business.***

Companies work best when they become places where people want to be and do great work...free of elephants. Places where leaders are clear and know where they want to go. And, as importantly, are able to inspire their people to want to go, too. Places where people show up fully, eager to contribute. Places alive with life and energy, moving forward and growing.

The Gallup organization's employee engagement studies that ran across 192 global organizations, included nearly 1.4 million employees. The study shows that work environments with high levels of employee engagement outperform those in low-engagement organizations by 22% in profitability and 21% in productivity. They also experienced 147% higher earnings per share than their competitors in 2011-2012. Gallup has also repeatedly confirmed the high correlation between employee engagement and more favorable customer ratings, lower turnover, fewer safety incidents and less absenteeism.

That's the direction successful business is moving—mindfully shedding outdated traits and practices and replacing them with those that effectively call forth human potential. Those companies who choose this new direction will be able to create a genuine competitive advantage. As such, you are invited to step into this powerful, next generation of business. This handbook is designed to help you begin.

The following 10 Scenarios highlight some of the more pervasive “Elephants” lurking in the areas of business performance and communication. Each Scenario presents one untended obstacle or “Elephant,” followed by a relevant Awareness and some practical ways to send the Elephant packing.

For the purposes here:

Leader = Any active owner/Founder/President
Executive/VP/Manager/Supervisor/Director/Team Leader

6 Performance Elephants

SCENARIO ONE

The Elephant:

The overloaded Leader who resists delegating to others.

Awareness:

Roadblocks to business growth and greater levels of success are at times generated at the leadership level. The work patterns and behaviors of leadership can have far-reaching effects on the overall health of the company. One such roadblock or pattern, is a reticence to let go of appropriate tasks or action, which can lead to a slowdown or stoppage of initiatives, projects or plans. The culprit in many of these situations is the leaders unrecognized or unacknowledged lack of trust in another’s ability to perform at acceptable levels. Micromanagement and work overload can be directly tied to this unconscious fear.

Removing the Elephant:

The more aware Leader understands that the company runs best when success and growth are the results of collaborative effort and flow.

Seven critical elements can make the difference:

- The leadership team knows and actively communicates the “core” of the business—the values, purpose, mission and vision—to all internal stakeholders
- Team is hired with intention and care; new hire “core” alignment is considered fundamental
- Desired outcomes for tasks and projects are stated with clarity, as well as, job descriptions and expectations
- Internal stakeholders play a crucial role in determining their own plan of action and are accountable to it
- Action planning is intentional, goal setting is SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant & time-based)
- Support is available as needed; feedback is recurrent
- Communication lines are open

SCENARIO TWO**The Elephant:**

The Leader who believes keeping employees off balance and anxious is the most effective way to manage and compel performance.

Awareness:

Research in neuroscience show that fear and anxiety exact a heavy toll on human beings. Physiologically, both produce hormones, which flood a person’s ability to access and utilize their rational mind. This flooding diminishes a person’s ability to be creative, innovative and resourceful—all of which are necessary and vital to performance. People are able to function in these types of environments, but not optimally and not for long. Creativity, innovation and resourcefulness are products of an environment that openly supports, appreciates and values people’s efforts. Moreover, individuals who receive clear and reliable feedback on their performance, tend to perform at higher levels.

Removing the Elephant:

Recognizing that fear and anxiety actually thwart engagement and performance, the more aware Leader is intentional about creating an environment that **supports** and **inspires**. They develop skills in active listening, coaching, facilitating and collaborating. There is an open and sincere company-wide invitation for candor, cooperation and contribution. Team goal setting and peer accountability help to strengthen personal responsibility and **lead to improved performance**. All of which help to shape a work environment better able to foster potential and excellence.

SCENARIO THREE

The Elephant:

The Leader who can't understand why the people of the company don't all behave and operate as the Leader does.

Awareness:

Like it or not, we are not the holy grail of how things need to get done. The way each of us performs an action, is simply one version or method—that's actually good news. Because of our diversity and unique set of skills, talents and experiences, we approach life and work differently. Outcomes and results can be aligned, but there are many ways up the mountain. Allowing for this **uniqueness** introduces the possibility for the new and improved. Keeping the goal planning SMART provides a reliable container for individual action. As importantly, people who develop their own goals and process for achieving them tend to be more inspired, accountable and successful.

Removing the Elephant:

The more aware Leader realizes that they don't have all the answers or best practices for getting things done. However, they do possess a clear vision of what they want to create and where they want the company to go.

They are intentional about enrolling people into that vision and using language that inspires, invites and includes. When people become infused with the vision and see themselves as true contributors, performance is catalyzed...in ways both unique and unexpected.

SCENARIO FOUR

The Elephant:

The staff members who work excessively long hours for fear of being judged as less loyal than their coworkers.

Awareness:

Many American workers are sick and tired of work...literally. For the last several decades there has been a professional poker game being played and the ante is time and other perceived offerings of loyalty. The idea is, the bigger the ante, the better your chances to win the next promotion or raise. Longer hours may make sense when working on a specific project, but some antes have gotten so excessive that health, family relationships and personal life are negatively impacted. **Tired, spent, stressed out** individuals compromise their creativity and capacity for innovation and resourcefulness. "Being at the office" for extended hours does not necessarily translate into working smart or working well.

Removing the Elephant:

Conscious Leadership recognizes this poker game for what it is. It realizes that health and wellbeing play a BIG role in remarkable performance. A more conscious Leader develops environments where people are **encouraged towards both performance and wellbeing**. They are clear about expectations and that includes the health of the people that work there. Extra work time is periodically required, but it is neither routine nor an expected aspect of work life. Conscious Leadership is committed to creating work places that champion performance *and* wellbeing.

SCENARIO FIVE

The Elephant:

The climate of control that permeates organizations.

Awareness:

In most cases, a desire to exert and maintain control is a response to some consciously or unconsciously perceived threat or fear. In business, the basic problem with control is that you can't control or manage a person to be excellent. **The pursuit of excellence is an inside job born of inspiration.** Which is why athletes rely on coaches and not managers to help them up-level performance and strive for excellence. For companies that yearn to be better, it's critical they transcend the limitations of control and unlock the power of inspired performance.

Removing the Elephant:

Conscious Leaders are inspirational. They recognize what supports a person and what tears them down. They ask important questions and listen. In essence, they become clear on what causes others to become engaged and what pushes them away.

SCENARIO SIX

The Elephant:

The belief that work is supposed to be an unhappy struggle.

Awareness:

Ask entrepreneurs what they think of their work and they will often say they **like or love what they do**. Ask corporate folks and you're likely to hear something quite different. There's several reasons for this. Entrepreneurs decide upon their goals and develop ways to carry them out. They feel connected to the work and know their efforts make a difference. Their contribution is vital to the success of the company and they are constantly learning new things by stepping outside of their skill set or comfort zone—all of which, leads to higher levels of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Removing the Elephant:

Here's what many entrepreneurs know...in spite of all the challenges, work can be fun, satisfying, fulfilling, amazing. Conscious businesses imbue the company with their own **entrepreneurial spirit**. Self-governing teams, goal-setting, peer accountability, an invitation for authenticity, tolerance for failure, clear communication of values, open communication, aligned purpose and mission—all can be employed to foster the entrepreneurial spirit in companies of any size.

4 Communication Elephants

SCENARIO ONE

The Elephant:

The Leader who only communicates to people when they are making mistakes.

Awareness:

When it comes to improved performance in the business world, silence may not be golden. People, by and large, want to know how they are doing—good or not so good. There is a tonic affect when individuals are provided feedback and believe they are doing well and a toxic effect when they are told nothing. In many cases, skillfully communicated feedback actually enhances future performance. Even the “not so good” feedback can be empowering when presented with care and followed up with constructive ways to improve moving forward.

Removing the Elephant:

The Leader possessing greater awareness knows that routinely connecting with the people of the company, even briefly, can be priceless. For these types of exchanges, the one on one time is kept easy and casual—free of agenda or expectation. Time is scheduled in the calendar every week for walking through the office—dropping in for a moment with a VP or Project Manager, an Administrative Assistant or the Receptionist at the front desk. It's a great opportunity to build trust, deepen relationships, receive feedback and observe the day to day. And, it's a powerful way to build greater allegiance and commitment...one person at a time.

SCENARIO TWO

The Elephant:

The Executive Leadership Team who are afraid to speak up.

Awareness:

The Emperor's New Clothes was a distressing fairy tale, but an even scarier business reality. The list of companies that flounder or fail because no one felt safe enough to speak up is long and chilling. It may be fascinating when a parrot mimics what a person says, but not an executive team. Evolved Leaders are strong and **confident enough to hear dissenting voices**. They know, that they don't know everything. And, they are wise enough to recognize, that another may have the perfect solution or insight.

Removing the Elephant:

The more evolved Leadership Team is empowered to say what they need to say when they need to say it. There is an open and explicit invitation to do so. In fact, it's both an invitation and an expectation. Teams are powerful when they are synergistic. They are impotent when its members become too afraid to speak up and speak out.

SCENARIO THREE

The Elephant:

The Leader who, not wanting to appear unkind, is unable to have candid conversations with employees about performance and expectations.

Awareness:

There can be great **kindness and care**, in **candor and clarity**. Professional feedback, when delivered thoughtfully and with compassion, can be a productive and enriching experience. It's all in the way the information is communicated. Consciously deciding not to characterize conversations as a "conflict" or "negative in nature," can make a big difference. It is simply communicating towards a productive outcome.

Removing the Elephant:

An aware Leader recognizes that clarity about performance objectives **helps and supports people to be successful**. It's the lack of information or misinformation that most often creates problems. When people have to fill in too many of the blanks, issues can develop. The necessary time is invested with internal stakeholders—clearly communicating what's expected as well as answering questions. All parties know they are welcome to step forward with a question or inquiry throughout the life of the project or work. This insures that course correction, when needed, stays fluid and dynamic.

SCENARIO FOUR

The Elephant:

The Leader who (consciously or unconsciously) establishes a “Don't ask, don't tell” policy throughout the company.

Awareness:

Hope is not a strategy. Hoping your people are engaged with the company and the work. Hoping everyone knows what needs to be done...that you have the right people in place...that they accurately perceive the company values and vision...that they will tell you what you need to know. Hoping, hoping, hoping. In order for a company to move forward and grow, **awareness is required**. Awareness gleaned from asking questions, gathering feedback, keen observation and proactive opportunities for thought and reflection. Much of what a Leader needs to know about what's really going on is contained within the people who work there. Just ask.

Removing the Elephant:

The conscious Leader is not afraid to hear the truth. In fact, they desire to know it. They recognize that valuable knowledge and information can come from any internal or external stakeholder. Because of this, they **intentionally create an atmosphere that is appreciative of all information** and an easy, comfortable and non-threatening way for people to share what they know. Maybe it's an open door policy, a direct cell phone line or an email that's private. Whatever the process, people trust it to be reliable and safe.

After reading the scenarios...

- 1) What are the elephants lurking around in your business?
- 2) What would it be like to have those elephants gone?

Becoming an Aware Leader

Developing greater awareness in your business begins with a desire—a desire to make things work better, run better, generate better, be better.



You cannot improve, solve, correct or enhance that which you do not see. Awareness is the key to start seeing and removing the Elephants.

The following steps are designed to help you begin to see things with more clarity...to cultivate greater awareness. Begin with Step One and dedicate some scheduled time to its exploration. Do your best to be honest and let go of the self-censoring mechanism—everything is welcome during this step. Steps Two and Three help develop your powers of observation. Spend a day or more on each bulleted item; note your observations and highlight areas that you feel need greater attention. Step Four is about expanding the net of awareness to include that of others. Ask, listen, learn.

STEP ONE

- Get clear on what you **want** and **don't want** in your life (and why)
- Get clear on what you **want** and **don't want** in your business (and why)

STEP TWO

- Observe your actions and behaviors; begin to notice the patterns
- Notice the thoughts that fill your mind and the beliefs you hold

STEP THREE

- Observe how others act, respond and behave at work; begin to notice the patterns
- Observe how people interact with one another at work
- Observe how people perform and relate to their work
- Become attuned to the underlying (but very real) energy at the business

STEP FOUR

- Routinely ask your people two questions: “How are you doing?” and “How am I doing?”
- Practice listening without judging

Sources

- Gallup 2013 State of the American Workplace Study
- Core Beliefs and Culture study by Deloitte

For More Information
or to schedule a “**Needs Discovery
Conversation,**” contact Momentum at:

e info@producemomentum.com

p (952) 926-0211



goodbye elephant