

# Katie Anderson: Helping leaders learn how to develop people

**K**atie Anderson, a lean leadership coach and performance improvement specialist, has been sharing her passion for developing people's leadership, problem-solving, and coaching capabilities within AME since 2017, when she joined as an AME Western Region board member and the facilitator for the San Francisco Bay Area Consortium. She says the reason she loves being a part of AME is, "I get a lot of joy from connecting people with ways to keep learning and advancing themselves. Being able to bring a diverse group of individuals and companies together on a shared learning journey, through the Consortium—connecting them in a way they didn't have an opportunity to be connected before—is rewarding."



live with intention, to be more intentional about how they're fulfilling their purpose for themselves or their organizations."

## How does your work connect to lean or people-centric leadership?

If someone is moving into a lean leadership role, his or her purpose is to create value for the customer and develop people to be better able to do that. I help people connect to that purpose and then align their practices to achieve it. From an organization standpoint, I help organizations do the same thing by helping leaders create the systems and structures to enable people to do their best work every day.

## What does that involve?

I coach leaders to first get clarity on the organization's priorities, and then to lead as teachers and coaches, not as the solvers of all the problems, to enable those who do the work to figure out the right solutions.

## Why do you think leaders need coaching to achieve these goals?

If leaders intend to create an organization where everyone is capable of solving problems to deliver on the organization's purpose, and where people are aligned and enabled to do their best work every day, a coach can help hold up the mirror when their actions are not aligned with those intentions. As a coach you can say 'This is what I have observed, and how does that fit with the outcomes you want to achieve?' Then you can help them align their behaviors with their

purpose to achieve that intention.

## Can you provide an example?

The habit that leaders often aren't aware of is asking leading or suggestive questions, which are like a wolf dressed up in a sheep's clothing—they are really your idea disguised as a question. Often these "questions" are asked because you want to lead someone to the answers that you have, not in service of helping someone solve a problem themselves.

## How do you help them discover this?

First is to create an awareness of the questions they are asking. A simple way to do that is to write down what they said in a certain meeting or situation, and then give them the evidence of their practice. People are always shocked by how many leading and suggestive questions they ask, and that awareness can help them make a big change.

## That sounds relatively easy.

It's hard to extinguish old habits. We all can think of those times where we jumped in as the problem-solver, or wanted to share our great idea—often in the spirit of being helpful—but the more we keep practicing and putting some intentionality to it, that's when we're going to start seeing the changes. We need to begin creating stronger, more effective habits.

Also, there's a time for telling, and there's a time for asking, and there's a time for teaching. A leader has to continually assess where the person is and how to most effectively help support him or her to do effective problem-solving. Just like problem-solving, coaching and developing people takes practice. •

The desire to connect people across different industries is what led Anderson to launch her company, KBJ Anderson Consulting in 2013, following senior lean leadership positions at Sutter Health's Palo Alto Medical Foundation and Stanford University's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. At these institutions, Anderson and her colleagues realized that to create sustainable lean practices, they needed to help leaders to develop their capabilities to develop their direct reports' problem-solving capabilities and to create management systems that support them in doing so.

Now, as part of her consulting practice, she helps people become better lean leaders and helps organizations build effective management systems. Her approach is to help people "lead and

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