Chapter 2
As a Manager—Can I Be Human?—The Two-Agenda Approach

Being genuine also involves the willingness to be and to express, in my words and my behavior, the various feelings and attitudes, which exist in me. […] It is only by providing the genuine reality which is in me, that the other person can successfully seek for the reality in him.

Carl Rogers (1961, p. 33)

This chapter focuses on:

- Characterizing the two-agenda approach,
- The features of each of the two agendas,
- The preconditions for following the people-oriented agenda,
- Describing and illustrating the synergy between the two agendas by case examples,
- Characterizing the leadership style emanating from the intertwined task and people orientation as symbolized by the two-agenda approach.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter puts forth a central idea of this book: the ubiquitous two-agenda approach, briefly denoted as the 2agendas@work. The basic idea is simple: To best meet the challenges of the contemporary workplace, a mature "rapport" between task-oriented and people-oriented activities and skills is needed. The objective of this chapter is to put forth a conceptually simple approach—the 2agendas@work. In this approach, the concept of a "people-oriented agenda" is introduced and paired with the more familiar concept of a task-oriented agenda. The use of the term "agenda" for both task- and people-oriented issues helps to explicate features of a people-oriented mind-set in the people-oriented agenda. This "agenda" is aimed at raising awareness of the need of "items" such as transparency or desire for understanding, as much as the usual task-oriented agenda has become an acknowledged part of any meeting. In particular, the people-oriented agenda is

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Table 2.1 Characteristics of the two-agenda approach (2agendas@work)

Task-oriented agenda	People-oriented agenda
Focuses on some specific task, goal, or plan	Focuses on providing evidence-based, socio-environmental conditions
Follows a business or impact plan	Respects self-organizing principles, shared responsibility, and subjective experience and awareness
Is specified, explicit, and tends to be in the foreground during meetings	Often resides in the background, becomes known as attitudes and feelings, and tends to be explicated on occasion
Is rather short term, can be composed, and changed quickly as strategies and goals change	Needs experiential learning and social contact to be acquired; is being assimilated; and can mature through experience
Is planned, strategic, and follows lockstep logic	Can be simple or complex, interwoven, dynamic, seeking integration, revealing the "big picture"
Has specified end goal	Is an ongoing process, sustainable, fluent rather than rigid Aspects of it are best explicated as part of the mission statement

explicated and specified in terms of its items and the preconditions necessary for following them, since this agenda often seems to be forgotten in Western cultures. Examples of transforming communication in the workplace by achieving a synergy between the two agendas will serve to illustrate a good rapport between them and between people who can access and follow each of the agendas as appropriate.

Table 2.1 describes each of the two agendas by listing their characteristic features.

2.2 The Two-Agenda Approach

As a manager, leader, or team member, we can imagine to always follow not only one but two agendas, a task-oriented agenda and a basic people-oriented "agenda":

- *Task-oriented agenda*: Transparently specifies whatever needs to be accomplished to reach some goal and result, or to follow a plan. It tends to be quite short-lived, having the lifetime of a meeting, a project, or working toward a specified outcome. Valuable previous work provides guidelines on how to design and follow task-oriented agendas (Doyle and Straus 1982) and online resources, such as making meetings work (KnowHow NonProfit 2016)
- *People-oriented agenda*: Implicitly holds and, at appropriate occasions, calls to life socio-environmental conditions and consequent behaviors that promote personal growth of all involved and the forming of constructive interpersonal relationships at the workplace. In brief, the people-oriented agenda stands for

putting forth person- and relationship-centered ways of being, acknowledging that we are human beings, above all (Rogers 1980; Barrett-Lennard 2013). The people-oriented agenda draws upon millions of years leading to human evolution, yet not in a naïve way, but seamlessly integrated with state-of-the-art evidence- and research-based interpersonal knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Cornelius-White et al. 2013a, b). Note that the term "agenda" in this context is used symbolically, aimed to call people aspects to mind explicitly, comparable to the well-known and practical notion of an agenda.

As Kurt Lewin remarked: "There is nothing more practical than a good theory" (1951, p. 169). However, its practice can become challenging, indeed, in our competitive and rapidly changing world of work. For example, a project is at risk, or production goes down and we can be left with employees but without resources to pay for their contracts. Moreover, the time pressure can work against our intention to find solutions that are acceptable to all. Or we may need our people to meet deadlines or acquire new projects and, at the same time, know that their families need them as well. We are left with ambiguity and conflicts and need all our capacities to find a solution or ways to cope with the situation.

2.2.1 Creative Tension

Again and again, I (Renate) am freshly experiencing the two simultaneous agendas generating creative tension—an evocative term I first encountered while reading Senge (2006). Typically, creative tension arises when we aim to bridge the gap between our vision and "reality," or when we aim to head toward two directions at once, such as to achieve some goal, task, or outcome ("productivity") on the one hand and to improve our human and social capacity on the other hand ("self-actualization," "social capital," "multidimensional intelligences") as in Gardner (Gardner 2006), Goleman (1995, 2011), Motschnig and Nykl (2014), Rogers (1961), and Ryback (1998). For example, consider an organization that wants to build and market a state-of-the-art mobile phone and, at the same time, improve the social relationships within the design team such that they look forward to collaborating on this and the next project (Motschnig-Pitrik 2015).

Below, I (David) recall a situation in which there is a conflict between what others consider the right, "standard" decision and one more specific, "exception-to-the-rule," "just-this-time" decision.

Example from experience:

For example, right now, I (David) am terminating a long-distance consulting relationship with an executive for which I am being paid by a large firm. The executive asked me whether I would consider continuing the consulting relationship with him on a self-pay basis, since the existing contract is coming to an agreed-upon term limit which does not allow for extending the time period. My first impulses are twofold: (1) There is a boundary issue here that might be violated if I continued the consulting, leading to a conflict of interest between me and the large firm; hence, I should not consider this offer. (2) I really enjoy working with this executive, and our interaction has evolved into a very meaningful exploration of his life issues. So currently, I'm exploring my inner impulses on how to deal with this new situation in a way that would be beneficial to all parties or at least not harm any of them.

The task-oriented agenda is to respect the needs of the large firm in terms of not compromising its contract with its client, i.e., making sure I don't solicit the client's business while I am working with the client on behalf of the firm. The people-oriented agenda is to be able to work with that client as my own, but making sure that this new relationship is created only after the first relationship is clearly terminated.

So when the client asked if I could take him on as my own client after the contract with the large firm ended, I responded by saying, "Let's not consider that until the first contract is clearly terminated. I don't want to be in a position of considering such business with you until the time is appropriate. And that time will be only after the first contract is clearly over." When the contract was over, I waited for the client to approach me with his request, which he did. Before we began the new contract, I checked with the large firm, and they agreed that this process was definitely acceptable to them according to their policy.

Before exploring how leaders and managers with a person-centered mind-set integrate the two agendas in Part II of the book, we compare and contrast the two-agenda approach with classical leadership terminology, such as Blake and Mouton (1964, 1985) or Bennis (2009).

2.3 Excursion to Leadership Styles

Traditionally, leadership styles have been characterized, among others, on two essential dimensions: task-oriented versus relationship-oriented, often drawn as the *x*- and *y*-axes of the Cartesian coordinate system (Fig. 2.1). This induces the image that the dimensions are independent and each leader personality would be posited in some range on the space spanned by the two axes, as in the famous grid suggested by Blake and Mouton (1964).

But this image does not depict what we feel when leading a team. What we do aim for is a tight interaction between the task and person/relationship aspects,

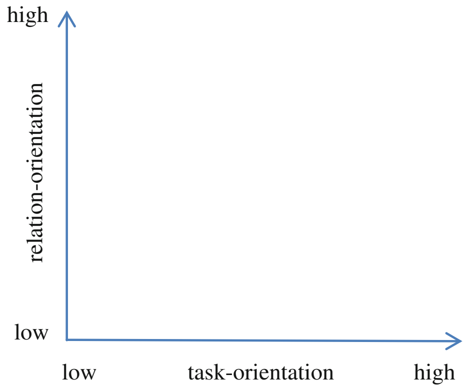

Fig. 2.1 Task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership styles as leadership dimensions in the classical perspective

resulting in a movement iterating between the two, as depicted in Fig. 2.2. The intention is to find—for each task, goal, or issue—a way to accomplish it in a way that would both

(i) accomplish the task, goal, or issue as effectively as possible *and*
(ii) be coherent with person- and relationship-centered principles/values as much as possible.

For brevity—and risking some oversimplification—let us refer to (i) as the task orientation and to (ii) as the people orientation. The term *orientation* has been chosen intentionally over the term *dimension* because the notion of a dimension (like horizontal, vertical) tends to signal independence. Typically, dimensions are independent, whereas orientations can have a common projection and head to close or to distant end points over time (Fig. 2.2).

Typically, the degree to which the people orientation can be followed will depend (among others) on the task orientation and vice versa, but the people orientation would inevitably always be there to influence us in the choice of

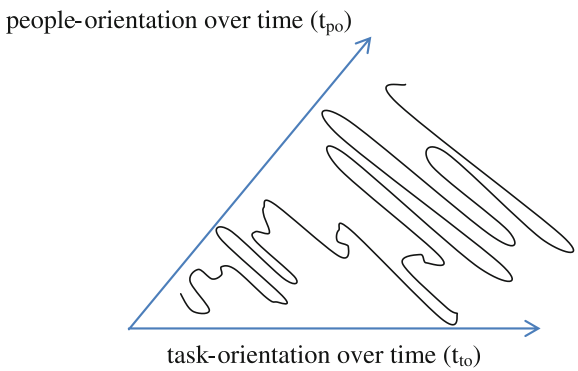

Fig. 2.2 The task and people orientation over time in transformative communication

task/goal, given we have a choice at all. So, for example, the human factor would make a difference in which project or task we engage in and how we choose to go about accomplishing the project, potentially calling for unorthodox approaches. However, in the longer term, this intertwined task *and* people orientation tends to result in credibility and cooperative, constructive relationships while accomplishing tasks satisfactorily. This is because the people component of the overall direction is consistent with who we are or, in more scientific terms, with the principles of self-organization (Goldstein 1939; Kriz 2008; Rogers 1951) and interpersonal development (Barrett-Lennard 2013). This dynamic has been confirmed in education and to some degree in organizations and management (Cornelius-White and Harbaugh 2010; Gordon 2001; Rogers 1975, 1978; Ryback 1989, 2010; Ryback and Sanders 1980; Ryback and Motschnig-Pitrik 2013).

What needs to be expressed is the interdependence of the two aspects. We need to reach some goal, accomplish something, *and* thereby be as person/relationship-centered, mature, resourceful, and cooperative as possible. We need to be authentic in a humanistic sense, not in the void or "per se," but in *some context*, we perceive as relevant—so to speak, to crystallize our personalities and relationships according to some challenge that would help us move forward in a particular *task* or goal as *social human beings*. We would bring our cultural and personal predispositions, but equally be aware that people issues and tasks are intricately intertwined (Böhm 2016).

To find an image for this new idea/insight that speaks to people at work, we created the two-agenda approach. Our communication and behavior would ideally be expressive of both agendas, although with varying focus on the one or the other. The way our brain supports us in following the two agendas and the competitive relationship between associated brain networks is discussed in Part 4 of this book.

To make the concept of the 2agendas@work more accessible, let us illustrate the interplay between them by an example from David's experience.

Example from experience:

Some time ago, in my younger years, while doing a training with a group of federal employees, I (David) was conflicted between the explicit task of "getting the job done," i.e., making sure every participant completed every task without fail, on the one hand, and allowing some slack so that the participants also enjoyed the process according to their whims, on the other hand. There was one woman, in particular, who just did not want to participate in one of the exercises. I confronted her from the head of the class and more or less forced her into participating at least at some level. This behavior on my part was a leftover from my more traditional teaching experience at the high school and college levels, where the level of maturity was not as developed and where an occasional student saw his role as defying authority (me) as part of his personality. In such situations, a contest between a student's negative attitude and my skills of maintaining control over defiance justified my coming across with all the strength I could muster.

After receiving feedback on my rigid demands, I realized how foolish I was to try and get this woman to do something which she found uncomfortable, for whatever reason. I was overwhelmed by my explicit demand to "get the job done" at the expense of listening to the needs of one individual for autonomy and self-direction. I learned, though it was a painful lesson. What I learned was to allow more of the basic agenda to enter the scene and to put into a less rigid context my need for control. The integration of explicit goals and basic attitudes could now spiral upward for a more successful approach to training.

Over time, I'm becoming more aware that the PCA is not always easy to manifest in our complex human interactions, particularly as trainers or leaders. The two-agenda approach allows us to see a bit more clearly where the challenges lie: I want and need to get the job done as efficiently as possible, but there is a part of me, if I nurture it and allow it, that can take into consideration others' feelings, needs, and sentiments. When the two integrate and spiral upward over time, then we are all winning. That creative inclusion is the beauty of the PCA at work, as we allow the two agendas to become integrated.

2.4 The People-Oriented Agenda

The people-oriented agenda is so basic that it underlies any meeting or activity that aims to move forward:

- its participants,
- the subject matter,
- the relationships among participants,
- the relationship between participants, subject matter, and the environment.

2.4.1 The Core Principle

The basic, people-oriented agenda is followed because it expresses part of who we are. It is not followed in order to achieve something except for meeting the other and, as a consequence, to ultimately meet oneself. It serves essentially to keep the flow of thoughts, feelings, meanings, ideas, words, and actions in and between us going. The flow is meant as the contrary to getting stuck, unable to move from some position.

2.4.2 Origin

The people-oriented agenda has been constructed from principles and ongoing research in person-centered psychology and related fields, as well as the authors' practical experience at the workplace in multiple contexts such as business, leadership, project management, educational settings, intercultural teams, workshops, etc.

2.4.3 Agenda Items

While having a logical sequence, the "items" in the "agenda" are connected and relevant all the time. They can be imagined as the instruments in an orchestra, all contributing to the masterpiece being performed. In particular, none of the items should be ignored completely at any time. They include the highest—under given circumstances *appropriate*—levels of the following capacities:

- Contact,
- Transparency of goals, vision, and participants,
- Respect toward the other, oneself, and the environment,
- Trying to understand and to be understood comprehensively and thoroughly,
- Collaboration and genuine sharing.

There are many ways to express and enact the "agenda." Resource Box 2.1 captures some of them in a concise form, while subsequent examples and experiences provide more lively information and thought.

Resource Box 2.1 Some ways of expressing and enacting the people-oriented agenda

- Contact
  - Establishing and maintaining contact by the means available and appropriate,
  - Greeting, shaking hands, making a bow, nodding, eye contact (in some cultures),
  - Taking time, presence, responding, responding to e-mail, calling, etc.
- Transparency of goals, vision, and participants whenever appropriate
  - Stating and elaborating goals,
  - Honesty, candor, open dialogue whenever appropriate,
  - Avoiding hidden agendas as much as possible,
  - Articulating with clarity,
  - Showing oneself and opening up appropriately.

- Respect toward the other, oneself, and the environment
  - Expressed through language (verbal and body), behavior, etc.,
  - Respecting the other's and one's autonomy and supporting it,
  - Including the other in meetings, decisions, information flows, social events, etc.,
  - Positive expectation, trust as attitude from which to start encountering the other and oneself,
  - Meeting at eye level of personhood, trying to be fair,
  - Feeling and showing respect toward nature and systems.
- Trying to understand and to be understood comprehensively and thoroughly
  - Active listening,
  - Empathic understanding of the other and the whole context,
  - Rich, encompassing understanding of the other in the context of the subject matter at hand and rich understanding of the project and its context,
  - Clarifying,
  - Simplifying appropriately,
  - Expressing oneself at multiple levels, facilitating understanding,
  - Using language in a way the other can understand.
- Collaboration and sharing
  - Being a resourceful person,
  - Removing blocks and aiming at flow within and between persons,
  - Constructive, appreciative as well as critical feedback,
  - Co-sensing, co-reflecting, co-actualizing (Motschnig-Pitrik and Barrett-Lennard 2010) and fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging,
  - Collaborative attitude, seeking for solutions cooperatively and co-owning them,
  - Avoiding harmful rivalry,
  - Facilitating self-organization and acknowledging systems dynamics.

2.4.3.1 Contact

Just as bird's-eye one another, dogs sniff one another and ants touch antennae, so do we humans approach one another with invisible "feelers." In our culture, we are most likely to shake hands or hug. The Japanese traditionally bow, how low depending on the difference in status. The traditional Inuit rubbed noses. Mandarins assessed one another by the nature of the gifts they exchanged. Most likely, when I (David) first meet you, our eyes make contact, and our hands reach out for the traditional handshake. Whatever the rituals are, contact—initial and ongoing—is crucial before we get down to the business of our interaction.

2.4.3.2 Transparency of goals, vision, and participants whenever appropriate

Most of us value our time very highly. We believe that most would agree that our time will be spent most efficaciously if we are honest at the outset. Can we state the point of our meeting early and clearly? Can we face the differences we bring to the table without rancor or ill feeling? Can we respect and appreciate that our differences, once clarified and resolved, only add to the mix of resources that harbor success? There is no power stronger than transparency among team members to get the job done quickly and effectively. And the better we know one another, according to Professor John Mayer of the University of New Hampshire, the better we will know how to interact with them (2014).

2.4.3.3 Respect toward the other and yourself

As a tyro consultant, I (David) was taught that everybody puts his pants on one leg at a time. I took from this that each person, even the most esteemed CEO, was, at the end of the day, just another human being, an individual independent of status. Years ago, this came home to me when I was hosting Carl Rogers who had come to my college to deliver a keynote address. Everyone was awed by him, hoping to be in his presence for a moment or two. One morning, as I had some responsibilities to take care of, I left Carl alone to relax at an outdoor table near the central building. When I returned, I found Carl in a deep conversation with an outlier student, who just happened to be passing by in his more-than-casual style of dress. I was surprised, but should not have been, that Carl did not give a flip for status. He treated everyone, and I mean everyone, with the same respect, appreciation, and even caring, as he did with his closest friends or distinguished colleagues.

2.4.3.4 Trying to understand and to be understood comprehensively and richly

Working with an intercultural team with members coming from industry and academia, we (Renate's team) tried to understand and respond to the business needs of our business partners rather than considering them "greedy" and ignorant of the scientific aspects of the project. With the feeling of being understood, they opened up and supported us academics as well as they could by incorporating the results from a study among end users into the software they were constructing. Taking the effort to understand members' different backgrounds definitely paid off, since finally the project was concluded successfully, even though, at times, it looked as if misunderstanding and conflict would make collaboration impossible.

2.4.3.5 Collaboration and sharing

After befriending Carl while hosting him for his keynote address at the college where I (David) taught, we got in the habit of exchanging letters and I subsequently wrote him about my desire to work on some projects with him. He consistently rebuffed my invitations by insisting how much he preferred to work alone. But a number of months later, he called me and invited me to come down to La Jolla to be considered by his colleagues to take on the task of helping to develop his group along new dimensions, such as business and education. In addition to that, I was able to co-author a significant paper with him when he was open to my doing some research on using the PCA for international peace negotiations. What this taught me was that by being open with him about my desire to work with him and allowing him to be honest about his desire not to do so and co-reflecting on our different styles, we were able, ultimately, to collaborate in ways that were comfortable to both of us. Appreciating the "co-construction" of a relationship with our different styles eventually led to constructive projects that benefitted from both our skill sets.

2.4.4 Features of the People-Oriented Agenda

The people-oriented agenda is characterized by the following features. It:

- *Is independent* of a particular national culture, field of work, or scientific discipline.
- This does not imply that the expression of the agenda items would be the same for all cultures; it just means that the agenda items as such are valid for all cultures, even though the manner and intensity of expression may vary considerably.
- Is *shared* by all, which means that all participants can follow it collaboratively.
- Is applicable to any kind of meeting directed toward some gain or value for each person or party involved as well as the interpersonal relationships among all involved. *It excludes a purely autocratic leadership* style and favors democratic, situational, inclusive, and transformational leadership styles.
- *Blurs* the "classical" *distinction* between task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership as it challenges participants to follow both ends through time. This does not imply that both ends are in the forefront at each instant, but it means that overall, both ends are considered at least to some degree.
- Does not stand alone. It is typically, but not necessarily, *intertwined* with some task-oriented agenda in the particular work context. The items on that agenda

can be imagined as instruments in the orchestra that take turns in delivering aspects of the melody.
- Can be very simple to follow or pose a major challenge, depending on the situation, and in how far participants have internalized *interpersonal capacities* and skills.
- *Is directed* toward moving forward in the relational context and toward constructive transformative learning and knowledge.
- Tends to be *transformative*. The end results it delivers are open yet specifiable. It is expected, though, that due to the evidence-based, self-organized forward movement of persons in a constructive atmosphere, the results of following the people-oriented agenda are favorable, whatsoever "favorable" means in any particular situation. For example, see Part II of this book.

A remarkable *paradox* arises around the people-oriented agenda:

The more convincingly and naturally we implement the basic, people-oriented agenda, the less it will actually serve as an agenda until it ceases to be an agenda. It can be imagined to transform itself into unfolding deep and significant learning in the participants. One can see it as contagious and residing in the participants, waiting to be released again and again. In other words, it can be seen as a natural tendency in people, to want to know more about others, appreciate them, and feel known and appreciated in turn. This satisfies deeply ingrained needs to feel connected with one another. The safer the environment feels, the more this natural tendency will prevail. A sense of threat can destroy this tendency very quickly. The challenge lies in circumventing this sense of threat by dealing with the inevitability of conflict with openness and transparency.

In the absence of threat, people can be very good at understanding others. "In five seconds," according to Randall Colvin at Northwestern University, people "can easily pick up on extraversion and conscientiousness as well as intelligence and any negative affect. It takes only several seconds longer for judges to accurately home in on openness, agreeableness, and neuroticism, as well as positive affect" (Weintraub 2015, p. 49).

Another useful feature of the people-oriented agenda is its capacity to serve as an *analytic tool* (see also the questionnaire in Table 2.1). We hypothesize that every interpersonal conflict can be traced back to not adequately addressing at least one (often several) of the "items" of the people-oriented agenda.

2.5 Preconditions for Following the People-Oriented Agenda

Following the people-oriented agenda can be either very simple or difficult, depending on our and the others' interpersonal capacities and the situation. Here are some preconditions that need to be met in order to be "fit" to follow this "agenda." On a personal level, they include:

- Having access to our feelings and being able to express them appropriately,
- Being sufficiently open toward the new, the unfamiliar, the ambiguous, people's multiple realities, the unorganized and, in general, the self-organizing principles and systems dynamics at work in the universe,
- Feeling respect toward yourself and others and being able to express it such that the other can experience it,
- Being able and desiring to listen actively and wanting to understand others from their perspective,
- Knowing about the principles of systems dynamics and self-organization capabilities,
- Having experience in working with groups, definitely it is a considerable advantage.

From an organization's or project's perspective, following the people-oriented agenda is facilitated by a number of environmental factors such as:

- Cultivating a style of communication where the expression of feelings is considered acceptable and even desirable,
- Empowerment by *including* employees in forming project goals and making decisions,
- Making employees *co-responsible* for reaching project success,
- Providing employees with opportunities for developing a comprehensive *understanding* of the project or organization, including its interfaces with customers and the surrounding system(s),
- Acting to support a feeling of community and *forming of bonds* among employees that reach beyond pure business matters,
- Granting and supporting of each employee's response ability and autonomy in areas in which it does not hinder project success, while living a leadership style that offers guidance where needed and dedicated personal support.

In particular, the factor of "autonomy support" has been confirmed to play a profound role in people's perceived well-being (Lync et al. 2009). In the context of researching self-determination theory (SDT), the authors found that people would experience less stress (be more congruent) when being with partners who are not imposing or controlling but rather accepting them as they are and even supporting their autonomy. Interestingly, the positive effect of autonomy support could be confirmed for populations from China, Russia, and the USA, i.e., for all three nations studied.

Interestingly, research by Bernier et al. (2010) at the University of Montreal found that those youngsters who were encouraged by their mothers to make their own decisions, rather than being told what to do, were more likely to have more impulse control and concern for others than those whose overcontrolling mothers told them how to respond. This held true even when the mothers' education and cognitive abilities were taken into consideration (Hane and Fox 2006).

Our strategy for deriving the preconditions was to integrate information from various sources such as Senge's 5 disciplines of the learning organization (Senge

2006), Rogers' theories of personality and interpersonal relationships (Rogers 1951, 1959, 1961), Barrett–Lennard relationship paradigm (Barrett-Lennard 2013), and Damasio's contributions to social neuroscience and phrase the conditions to suit the work context. We decided to put them forth as an assumption and leave further empirical testing to follow-up research. From our perspective, there may be other preconditions for following the people-oriented agenda that might be added to this list.

Table 2.1 is intended as a resource to self-assess yourself or your colleagues on the items of the people-oriented agenda by responding to 5 key questions. The last, sixth question serves to assess your or your colleagues' competence in the task-oriented agenda in order to be able to relate people- and task-oriented aspects.

A. **Contact**
The manager/associate

1. avoids contact as far as possible and tends to keep the door closed (both literally and figuratively),
2. has minimal contact with others and it is difficult to really communicate with,
3. keeps in touch on demand and approaches others when contact is indispensable,
4. is interested in keeping in touch, sometimes initiates contact, and communicates openly,
5. is genuinely interested in others and initiates and nourishes contact.

B. **Transparency and openness**
The manager/associate

1. avoids questions, is not accessible, and refuses open conversation,
2. hides behind his/her position and it is difficult to communicate with him/her with any degree of transparency,
3. responds with some degree of openness,
4. tends to communicate openly and transparently,
5. communicates totally transparently, gives honest feedback, and is perceived as genuine.

C. **Respect**
The manager/associate

1. meets associates without any respect and does not consider their requests,
2. hardly respects the associates' requests and demands,
3. respects the associates' needs and requests to some minor degree,
4. is generally respectful toward associates and encourages them,
5. is full of trust in associates, encourages them, and lets them experience his/her acceptance.

D. **Trying to understand**
The manager/associate

1. completely ignores the associates' needs,
2. hardly responds to the associates' needs and interests,
3. to a minor degree reacts to what the associates share,
4. usually reacts appropriately to what the associates share so that they feel understood,
5. completely understands the associates' needs and interests and is supportive of them.

E. **Collaborative attitude**
The manager/associate

1. meets others in a demotivating way, ignores their ideas, and does not invite cooperation,
2. tends not to be interested in any collaboration and avoids it as far as possible,
3. collaborates with selected partners if benefits are clearly perceivable,
4. is generally supportive of making progress together,
5. meets others with encouragement and support and acts proactively in promoting collaboration.

F. **Competence in subject area: Bridge to the task-oriented agenda**
The manager/associate

1. appears to be lost in wide areas of the meeting's or project's subject area,
2. seems to be quite incompetent in the respective subject area,
3. is moderately competent in the subject area and reasonably capable of expressing it,
4. leaves a competent impression and is skilled in expressing key issues of the subject area,
5. proves expertise in the subject area and can raise enthusiasm in associates.

Table 2.1: Questionnaire assessing attitudinal conditions to follow the people-oriented agenda in work situations. The questionnaire is extended by the feature "competence in subject area" to establish a connection to the task-oriented agenda and thus assess the competence to follow both agendas in some particular subject area. The questionnaire loosely follows Aspy's (1972) questionnaire, basically sharing the five-point scale where three serves as a threshold for person-centered communication [*Version 1.0 by Renate Motschnig, 01/09/2014*].

In a research study among students of computer science, instructors who were rated high on their interpersonal capacities were those who could motivate students most to participate in class (Motschnig-Pitrik 2005). Interestingly, low or intermediate ratings in the interpersonal aspects came with somewhat lower ratings on the subject-related competencies, suggesting that instructors who do not interact very well with students are perceived as less competent in the subject matter.

In the questionnaire above, level 3 means a threshold. Being below that level on any of the attitudes designated by "A" to "E" indicates that the people-oriented agenda tends to be dropped at some situations. It is difficult for the respective person to follow it consistently. On the other hand, being above (including) level 3 means that the testee fulfills the preconditions of following the "people-oriented agenda." In any case, we conjecture that we can always move upward. The case example below is intended to illustrate two variants of a whole interaction sequence between a manager and a team member with a varying sensitivity to people issues (iCom Team 2014, pp. 185–186).

Case example

Both of the following two conversations aim at setting up a plan on how to resolve a delivery problem [MG stands for manager; TM stands for team member].

Situation 1:

MG (*with a critical tone*): Did you deliver the system to our client, McDuck?

TM Not quite. They brought some old data sets that our database didn't upload

MG How could this happen?

TM (*defensively*): It was not specified precisely. Who could know that they wanted to import from ancient database versions!

MG (*upset*): Why was this not included in the specification? You know that omissions and errors in the specification can be very costly!

TM (*explaining*): We had specified data imports from the client's database and tested their samples all the way back to version 5. The representative from McDuck was given still older data to be uploaded and they hold the position that these datasets must be handled as well

MG So either you can deliver this extension within the next three days or we need to argue that these very old versions are not part of the contract! Why the hell is there always something not working properly!

TM (*submissively*): I'll work on it as soon as possible. Clients can be nasty, for sure.

Situation 2:

MG (*with an interested voice*): Hi, how are you today? Did you deliver the system to client McDuck?

TM Not quite. They brought some old data sets that our database didn't upload. So you can imagine I'm not really happy about that

MG I see. (*pause*) They brought some old formats that they wanted to have uploaded, hmm, and I assume this was not explicitly specified beforehand? (*looks up to TM, TM nods his head for approval, pause, then with a voice expressing curiosity and openness*) Well, what is your sense of this situation?

TM (*thoughtfully, kind of thinking aloud*): Well, as far as I know, they really need those datasets for their business statistics, so I'd sure like to extend the code to cover the old data formats. (*pause*) I guess I need to take a look at how much effort this would mean. I assume it's not a big issue and I can resolve this soon or ask them for a time extension. (*genuinely after a short pause*) My sense indeed is, that the way we deal with them and provide our services, this time will be decisive for any future contacts!

MG (*frankly*): Makes a lot of sense to me. Just go ahead and let me know whenever you need me and how things are going. Good luck, great to have you "on board"!

☕ Invitation to reflect:

How does each scenario resonate with you? How would you describe/label each of them?
How far does each of them implement or ignore each of the two agendas?
In which situation does the manager have two agendas on his/her mind?
How does the team member react in each case?
In the first situation, which items of the "people-oriented agenda" are neglected? How is the second situation different regarding these items?
As a manager, how would *you* react? As the team member, what would you say?

While further ideas and inspiration on integrating the people-oriented agenda follow throughout the book, below we share what we have found useful to improve our people-oriented "fitness":

1. *Openness*. Be open to the questions that others ask. Sympathize with the perspective that leads to their question, as this may be much more relevant than the answer you might offer. Rather than giving a complete response to the question, allow it to be a bridge to mutual understanding.
   Example: "What should I do, A or B?" Response: "Seems like a tough decision you have to take. Tell me, what brings you into the situation of needing to choose between A and B?"
2. *Being a mediator*. Facilitate others to explore their options while accompanying them in taking the risk of considering what feels right to them rather than just what others expect of them.
   Example: "If I understand you correctly, the coordinator wants you as expert to make design decision regarding the web-portal, while you are convinced that you need to include end-users to produce a usable solution. Well, what feels appropriate to you to move on in this situation?"

3. *Stepwise approach*. Realize that using the people-oriented agenda of transformative communication with others—as opposed to the conventional style of appearing as if you are in control of every detail—is not at all easy. It comes with a considerable portion of risk and needs empathy to result in tactful interaction. Be aware that the freedom once granted to others is extremely difficult to reclaim and introducing control later on in all likelihood may cause lots of trouble. So, rather than radically switching from being in control to granting total freedom to others, you may want to be "diplomatic": Establish good communication first and then move in deliberate steps such that all can learn to deal with the newly acquired responsibilities.
4. *Nonjudgmental stance*. Don't look down at those insisting on convention and predictability and the traditional, competitive approach. Be open to a world that has room for both. Otherwise, we risk becoming authoritative on behalf of a democratic approach.
   Example: "Oh, you're missing the detailed plan for the activities of the transition phase? I see. What if you were to go ahead and propose such a plan from your perspective, then we'll see how much it will help us once we come as far as installing the software at our customer's site?"
5. *Lifelong learning*. Whatever skills or techniques you acquire to use with others, always consider that you can improve on them and become a better facilitator for others and yourself. Stay open to experiential learning and transformation in each situation as these tend to lead to becoming spontaneously tactful and acquiring a quality that resembles diplomacy but is much more genuinely owned.
6. *Conflict and support network*. Don't be surprised when your non-traditional approach leads to conflict with those who do not understand it. In such cases, just accept the difference and continue to be open and tactful. Professor Mischel (2014) of Columbia University maintains that such self-control is an important factor in ultimate success. Having others around you, who understand the challenge and occasional loneliness and vulnerability of being so open-minded, can be an ongoing support in this highly meaningful process. Just as you support others in their quest for authenticity, so do you benefit by having a safe community of others who value the process.
7. *Reflection and making sense*. Any experience can be considered as a source of learning that can be vastly multiplied if the experience is reflected upon, by oneself and in particular with others.
   For example, trying to reflect from multiple perspectives what it was that let a small project fail can be an enormous resource for the next large project in order not to repeat the same mistakes.
8. *Creative tension*. Usually, there is a gap between the given "realities" and our vision, plan, solution, etc. That gap can be perceived as causing tension. It is up to us to potentially use this tension to let something new, creative, desirable evolve by sensitively listening to others rather than rushing into "fix things" the way we think they need to be resolved.

9. *Physical fitness*. Being fully present at the moment, resourceful, flexible, showing one's genuine interest, surviving conflict, etc., all consume energy. In research with teachers, it was found that "physical fitness is necessary to sustain constructive interpersonal relationships across long periods of time" (Rogers 1983, p. 214). Also, "student teachers with higher levels of physical fitness accepted their students' ideas more often and criticized their students less often than did student teachers with lower levels of physical fitness" (Rogers 1983, p. 214). We assume that being as physically fit as possible would also be an advantage for sustaining constructive interpersonal relationships in workplaces other than classrooms.
10. *Self-acceptance as a bridge to power*. Allow your openness—to yourself and others—be a bridge to power, a sense of your own self-acceptance and self-respect. Your individual growth, and sharing and supporting others' growth, is the transformation to a "new diplomacy," the bliss to be followed and enjoyed. That direction is always your choice—forever.

Invitation to reflect:

Identify one or two items above that speak to you and imagine how you could implement them in your project or organization.
If you know another item that you think should be added to the list please contact the authors at the contact given in the foreword—thank you in advance!

2.6 Conclusions

This chapter argues that long-term, effective work is tightly intertwined with the complex, evolutionary, social, and human basis of our interpersonal nature, enriched by lifelong learning, experience, and knowledge. To illustrate the interdependence between the task and people orientation at work, we introduced the two-agenda approach. It allows one to explicitly distinguish between the task requirements on the one hand and the human demands, the imagined people-oriented agenda, on the other hand. At the same time, however, the notion of two complementary agendas implies that both have to be kept in mind and followed by taking turns as to which one is called to the foreground, while the other is left to rest in the background awaiting its turn. While this chapter has focused on introducing the two-agenda approach and illuminating the "items" of the people-oriented agenda, Chap. 12 will explore integrating the people-oriented agenda in key situations such as negotiation, conflict management, and decision-making.

So how does all this contribute to the transformation of interpersonal dynamics in the workplace? The two-agenda approach sets the basis for transforming how we communicate in all aspects of our work. By being more candid and transparent from the beginning, we get to the basis of what our meeting or project is all about. We listen to the other more carefully and with the intent to understand more deeply the relevant issues at hand. We are more honest about our own reactions to the extent that they are relevant and authentic. When all this happens, the transformation takes place. What has changed is that the honesty of all this contributes to a form of communication that is not only more enriching and fulfilling but also much more highly effective in reaching solutions that work more effectively. If this sounds revolutionary, it is merely making sense of what works and has worked. Interacting with genuine openness to others' perspectives *is* the challenge. And to be honest about a reality that objectively rings with clarity, this trumps the customary, traditional modes that have not worked so well in the past.

Thus, managing to integrate the two agendas—to hold the creative tension and to realize the potential that accrues from it—tends to have transformative effects. Depending on where we start from and how others come along, the transformation can be tremendous or subtle; in any case, however, it tends to have a constructive direction and feel right, reducing stress.

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