

Welcome to the twenty-first edition of Jennifer Selby Long's *Traveling Light*. Are you blessed with the talent and opportunity to lead? *Traveling Light* will skyrocket your impact and lighten the load inherent in your life. It's based on the work of executive coach and management consultant Jennifer Selby Long. Copyright 2008 Jennifer Selby Long. All rights reserved.

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How to Quickly Warm Up Your Team so You Can Get Them to Tell You the Truth

Have you ever had to take over a team that had reason to not tell you the truth? These situations can be tough, such as when the team is in need of a performance turnaround or when you got the top job over some of the candidates who were already on the team. In other cases, the team may have considered themselves a competitor to your previous team, and now perhaps you're bringing the two teams together.

Recently I was talking with a client who was in exactly this situation. He wanted to draw out the team members in their first meeting because he knew that getting their thoughts and concerns out of the table would begin to dissipate any bad feelings and give him insights into how aware they were of the various problems they would be facing. How wise of him! He was extremely successful in this meeting, and you can be, too.

Begin with a blank shared document divided into four quadrants. If everyone on the team is in the same room, you could skip the shared document and use a flipchart for a more active and lively engagement.

Assign each quadrant a question, and be sure there is a mix between objective and more subjective questions.

The list below includes questions that worked well for my client and others that have worked well for me over the years. Multiple wording options are included because – you guessed it -- some teams respond better to certain words than others:

1. What opportunities/possibilities do you see for our team?
2. What hopes/goals/desired outcomes do you have for our team this year?
3. What do you love about work?
4. What would you most like to see change in the coming year?
5. What concerns/fears do you have for our team?
6. What do you want to know about me?
7. What are two things you're proud of?
8. What's the "secret sauce" on this team, something that works really well?

Ask that each individual contribute an answer to each quadrant, including yourself. If you are holding a virtual meeting, someone will need to type in the answers as they are called out. If you are all in the same room, you can give everyone large post-it notes and ask them to place their post-it's in the correct quadrant.

It will take very little time to do this, leaving you ample time to explore their answers, gain a better understanding of their perspectives, and of course, listen, listen, listen.

You will probably find that they see eye-to-eye with you on more than you had thought possible and of equal importance, you will begin to build trust by genuinely hearing what they have to say and sharing openly yourself. Amazingly, they will start telling you the truth.

That's Us with Senator Barbara Boxer!

There was no time for my reading addiction last weekend because I was busy meeting my favorite politician, Barbara Boxer. I was little bit ga-ga but got up the courage to ask her for a photo for *Traveling Light*.

Senator Boxer was hosted by my client Dean Hanley, an attorney, and his wife, Helene Cahen, a creativity consultant. That's the four of us in the picture with Senator Boxer.

The Governor is making noises about running against her once his term is up, so she is already out fundraising. In fact, all of the serious potential competitors are independently wealthy and as she put it, "I could write a \$100,000 check, too, but it would bounce."

I had never attended a political luncheon before. What a way to start. Senator Boxer is as amped up and passionate as when she first ran for office over 25 years ago. She is a real leadership inspiration!

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