

JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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THE Learning Advantage

Mobley's Musings

I see many people struggle because they fear conflict. But in trying to avoid conflict they often make a difficult situation worse, leading to suboptimal decisions, tolerance of bad behavior and unresolved tension. I find issues can often be resolved without conflict through good communication and by managing expectations.

For example, Tina, a program manager at an IT firm, was irritated with her analyst, Rita, who routinely arrived at work well after 9 am. I asked Tina if she had ever discussed this with Rita. Tina admitted that she had never explicitly discussed their work hours and assumed that bringing it up now would cause Rita to become defensive and angry. But instead of criticizing Rita for not picking up on the office's standard work hours, I suggested Tina could say, "Rita, I have been remiss in not discussing work hours with you. Going forward, you need to arrive no later than 9 am." This way Rita doesn't feel like she's being reprimanded and Tina doesn't have to justify why she hadn't brought up the subject before.

Eric, a CEO of a financial technology firm, is a kind and gentle leader who's stated, "I hate conflict." In avoiding conflict, Eric is allowing senior managers to go about doing things their way without regard for how they affect others. Eric realized that by not settling disagreements among his team, conflict only grows. I shared a process with Eric to help him lead his team through decision making that provided clarity without conflict.

How we envision a conversation can impact how the conversation



The Power of Curiosity

It May Kill Cats, But It Strengthens Relationships

In much of our life our competence is measured by our ability to provide answers. At work, we may feel that asking questions is a sign of weakness or incompetence. But thinking we must have all the answers, whether to save face or to project competence, can have negative results. On the other hand being curious won't kill us or our careers. In fact, asking questions keeps us from making costly mistakes and helps us build trust.

goes. Rather than expecting conflict, I look for understanding. Being open and curious about others' viewpoints allows you to examine a situation more completely and dispassionately, which lessens disagreements. The next time a potentially difficult situation arises, rather than expect conflict, expect clarity. An improved outcome may be as simple as changing your expectations.

Sandy



Sandy Mobley

Ask Sandy

I have some clients who struggle to stay organized and one who is so organized, that she has little tolerance for staff members who are not. This caused me to wonder— are we born with skills to organize or do we learn them? As a little girl, I loved making lists and checking off things I accomplished. I still remember the tooth-brushing chart the dentist gave me. I put it on my bedroom wall and loved putting a check mark each time I brushed my teeth.

Today I still use lists to keep me focused. I prefer to write them down and keep them on my desk. If I use the list features on my computer, it is out of sight and out of mind. As I look at the list each morning, it helps me focus on what is most important for today. I rarely choose more than two to three key areas for focus. And, they are always things that align with my goals. I don't know how to prioritize without having clear goals.

One of my clients uses index cards for all his tasks— one task per card. Each morning he looks at the cards and picks the one that is most important and he pins it on the corkboard over his computer. If he finishes that one, he picks another one.

Since there are goals in many domains, I would use colored-index cards (or post-it notes). I'd choose red for business, green for financial, yellow for fun, etc. Perhaps that is going overboard? But when you love to organize, it can become the goal and not just the means to the goal.

Asking questions has obvious practical benefits. Even when you think you understand a request, it's often helpful to ask questions to verify your understanding and fill in details. The last thing you want to do is complete a request only to discover you've misunderstood the assignment because you made assumptions that turned out to be unfounded. By clarifying intent, asking questions avoids misunderstandings, not to mention wasted time and energy.

[Read more.](#)



Some people do well with the day planner/organizers and some love the list-making apps like OneNote. Whichever process you use, another important point is to assign a date for completion. I find due dates motivate my behavior. If I have a meeting scheduled with my financial planner, tax accountant, etc., I am sure to have my work accomplished prior to the meeting. If I wait until I have things pulled together to schedule, I may put it off.

Think about what your completion motivators are and put them in place to ensure you achieve your goals. I find letting things go on too long increases stress and saps energy for more important things.

Learning for Leaders – Spend time with your assistant deciding how best to organize and prioritize your work. Your assistant can support you better when he/she knows how you organize and what your priorities are.

Coaches Corner – Help clients recognize what organizing tools could keep them on track and effective. Find out what gets in the way of staying/being organized.

If you have questions you'd like Sandy to address in future newsletters, email them to sandy@learningadvantageinc.com

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