

JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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Mobley's Musings

We have heard about the halo effect – where people who are seen positively in one situation have that favorable impression in other instances. Ginny is a ‘golden girl.’ She was hired from a top tier business school and joined the organization with high expectations for her performance. She led a new project that was very successful and helped her company out of a slump. She has been asked to take on another project that isn’t in her skill set and she is worried that she will tarnish her image. She feels the halo causes others to be jealous of her and eager to see her fail.

I also see the horn effect where someone who messes up in one situation is demonized in other areas. Casey was asked to sell off some property her company no longer needed. She had never done anything like this before, but wanted to please her leaders. She worked hard to find buyers and was successful, only to have legal shut down the sale. She wasn’t aware of some of the complications in the sale and had she been, she wouldn’t have approached the sale in the same way. Now she is seen as a loose cannon who potentially put the company at risk. This is the only time in her working relationship where she made a big mistake, but other leaders aren’t willing to give her a chance.

Rarely are any of us all good or all bad. How can leaders be more balanced in their assessment of performance and set expectations where everyone can succeed? If making a mistake means you never get another chance, people will play it safe and innovation won’t flourish. One client has a concept called ‘fail fast’ to promote learning. They recognize that with risk taking and perhaps a missed step, a new opportunity for success takes flight.

Sandy

Ask Sandy

Partnering with the Boss

At some point in our careers, we all run into a boss that we have difficulty working with. I know my clients face this all too often. Countless articles and books have been written about “managing up” and actively promoting your work to your boss. But often the guidance comes off sounding cynical and manipulative. Being a “yes man” or playing office politics is not likely to improve your relationship with a boss.

Instead, a better approach is to partner with your boss. There are three predominant types of bosses I have encountered, and each requires a different approach when it comes to partnering with them. They each care about different things and have different styles and ways of working.

Visionary Boss

The Visionary boss is a big-picture strategic leader who can have a million ideas, some of which are brilliant and some a waste of time. Your job is to help



Sandy Mobley

Several clients have raised issues related to building trust. Janice is working with other groups where collaboration is important. She found that she was expecting the other groups to 'trust' that they had shared goals and would support each other. Much to her surprise, a few of the groups thought Janice was working in her own interest and not looking out for others.

I asked her what she did to build trust and she said she gave trust and expected others to give their trust in return. I asked what other people did that earned her trust and she said two things: 1) being transparent and 2) delivering on promises. This is a great example of behaviors, expectations and perceptions. Janice's work ethics were to

be collaborative and to trust. She expected others to exhibit the same behaviors. Unfortunately, her team did not perceive her as building trust. In this situation and many others, you can't assume that co-workers are living your reality. Clear communications early on will clarify your work ethic and everyone's responsibilities to deliver and trust one another.

Ben mentioned how he had taken over a central function providing support to multiple divisions. While centralizing support made sense from an economic point of view, the divisions were fearful that losing their support function would mean that they wouldn't get the same level of service. One of Ben's employees, Sue, was the interface with another division.

Imagine Ben's surprise when he found that Sue had never met with them. While overseeing a build out of office space, she had merely scheduled it and never looked to see that it was being done effectively. He had trusted his employee to recognize how important it was to be present and available when working with the new divisions. Ben had assumed that he could trust Sue to do the right thing with her attention to details and being physically on site to check on the build out's progress and the construction crew's adherence to the plan. Early on in a work relationship, sometimes you have to clearly state your expectations: "I trust that you will be there at least once a week to check progress and report back to the new division with updates."

One adage states that trust is won in inches and lost in yards. It is so much better to set a positive relationship up front than to have to go back and repair one that is broken.

Learning for Leaders – Share your values and let people know how to earn your trust.

Coaches Corner – Ask clients how they build trust and if they are explicit when sharing what it takes to earn their trust.

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

define and implement the brilliant ideas. This type of boss tends to stay out of the details, trusts you to make the vision a reality, and rewards you for figuring out how to implement the best ideas. Visionary bosses tend to be positive and not critical. They can also leave you out of decisions and not communicate changes that may affect you—not from malice; they're just not paying attention to details.

Since this boss is so big picture, it may be hard to understand what she wants. As a result, you may find that your efforts to develop project plans were wasted because your concept didn't hit the mark. But asking your boss to better define her ideas at the outset will not likely be taken well. Rather than constantly throwing darts into the dark hoping you hit something, try developing an outline (or "beta" or strawman) so you can get the early feedback you need to know you are on track.

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