

JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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THE Learning Advantage



Heart at Work

Many of us are working long hours under stressful conditions. For some, the inevitable result is job burnout. But others seem to flourish under these conditions. What makes one stressful job intolerable but another stimulating? For me, a job that gives me a measure of control over what I do and a sense that what I do matters makes all the difference. Working with people who are collaborative and actively help others succeed also makes a challenging job gratifying. But ultimately the deciding factor that makes any job worth doing is being appreciated and acknowledged for one's accomplishments.

When I ask people how they know if they are performing well, I'm astonished to hear them say, "Well, I keep getting a pay check and occasionally a raise" or, "they haven't fired me yet." It's disturbing that so few employees are acknowledged for their good work and talents, and that few feel valued and important to the organization. It's been said that "community is a place where we can bring our gifts and have them appreciated." For many expecting to find community at work, the reality of their jobs leaves them sadly disappointed.

But it doesn't have to be that way. When I recall the jobs I enjoyed the most, the common thread was a feeling of being loved. The people I worked with had such big hearts that I couldn't help but feel appreciated. For example, when an information systems branch in Dallas hired me as their first female systems engineer (SE), I felt significant pressure. But the two senior male SEs took it upon themselves to ensure I'd be successful.

Team Support

From teaching me software shortcuts to telling me racy jokes so I wouldn't blush when the salesmen teased me, I never doubted their support or my talents. I remember how eagerly I went to work, how much I learned, and how quickly the days went by because of the supportive culture and how much we laughed. We always had lunch together, and work sometimes felt more like play. Sadly, after just three months, the information systems division was written off and we all lost our jobs.

But even the layoff process was heartfelt. Instead of allowing the rumor mill to kick in, management was upfront about the the possibility that our division would be closed.

[Read more.](#)



Mobley's Musings

While vacationing in France this summer, I visited the Rodin Museum and was captivated by the sculpture of a woman known as *Meditation*. The plaque next to it notes: "Rodin considered it one of his most accomplished works." I smiled when I read that because I have found meditating, or listening to your inner voice, is one of the most important things we can do to access deep wisdom.



Sandy in Paris, France

We all have deep wisdom, but we don't always take the time to listen to it. When I am coaching, I give clients time to pay attention to their inner voice and reflect on their experiences. During that reflection, insights often occur. A client may realize a deep longing within for something new or different. Sometimes a client will become aware that a team member may be struggling and needing help or sense that a recent decision doesn't feel right. When clients step back from the clutter of their everyday existence and explore their feelings, it always leads to better outcomes.

Listening to my inner voice has saved me from many suboptimal decisions by refusing to let my need for closure dominate. And I have lots of examples of when I didn't listen and the results were not pretty.

How do we make sure we are taking advantage of the deep wisdom within ourselves? Meditation, even for a few minutes a day, opens us up to those thoughts. Writing in a journal and reading what you have written can also reveal insights. And for some, prayer and/or spiritual reflection can provide that stillness that allows for deeper contemplation.

Sandy



Sandy Mobley

Ask Sandy

Clients who have recently changed jobs often tell me they can't wait to "show 'em what I got." As a coach I applaud their enthusiasm, but it can blind them to considering a more basic question: How do I create a positive first impression at a new job?

The adage "you only have one chance to make a first impression" is clear in a cautionary tale about an overly eager new hire. Lance had been out of work for some time due to a corporate downsizing. When he finally found a new position, he was so keen to show his value that he spent the first week documenting all the department's problems and how he would fix them. The next week he gave his manager suggestions about how she might want to reorganize the department. The third week he was let go. Now Lance wasn't entirely at fault. His manager should have done a better job of familiarizing him with the department's culture and norms in his very first week. Suggesting that he observe, listen, learn, and do as he's asked for awhile before assuming he knew how to do things better could have saved him from a swift departure. Even if you are a rock star, taking it slow and looking before you leap is appropriate when you are new to any organization.

Clues to an organization's culture are everywhere if you are alert to them. A new manager, Loretta, was invited to sit in on the first executive leadership program in her organization. When the team made its final presentation, she was the first to speak, jumping in with helpful ideas on what they could have done better. The other managers, however, gave the team positive comments, focusing on what they did well and thanking them for their work. If they made a suggestion for improvement, it was understood as supportive rather than criticism. Loretta listened and learned to offer appreciative comments, which she came to realize were like an organizational lubricant ensuring smooth operation.

I've worked with several organizations that offer transition coaches when they bring in someone new at a senior level. They recognize that helping new leaders understand the organization's unique culture is key to their success. Even if he has been tasked with "turning things around," a new leader who comes in making immediate and sweeping changes and being critical of how things have been done runs the risk of alienating the staff and his direct reports. Not being sufficiently grounded in why things are done a certain way is detrimental to building trust and cooperation. It is better to wait, listen, and learn what the organization is doing right and understand why it operates the way it does.

One caveat: while acting too fast can be disastrous, not acting fast enough can also be problematic. By clarifying your leaders' expectations regarding action, you can be sure to start off on the right foot.

Learning for Leaders – When bringing in new managers, take time to help them understand the culture – and when and how to act.

Coaches Corner – Help the client recognize what is unique about the culture and pitfalls to watch out for.

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

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