

JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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THE Learning Advantage

Mobley's Musings

A fool, it is said, trusts everyone while a cynic trusts no one. Given a choice, I would rather be a fool.

I've noticed that sadness and isolation grow from trusting no one. Imagine being afraid to take a vacation for fear that your house will be robbed while you're away. Or not enjoying your possessions for fear that you might lose them. Or not letting someone help you for fear they will cheat you. Recently my husband and his brothers conducted an estate sale of their parents' belongings. While I witnessed a few people who switched prices or stole, most people were honest and generous in recognizing they were getting a good deal even when they didn't haggle for a discount.

I believe that when you trust people, they appreciate your confidence in them and work even harder to maintain your trust. Consider ways you can let people know you trust them and see what results you get. And for leaders, think about how much more engaged and respected your employees will feel when you demonstrate your trust in them.

Sandy



Sandy Mobley

Ask Sandy

Clients often complain about the amount of firefighting they do each day and how it gets in the way of strategic planning and regular operations. For the ones who prefer an ordered, considered approach to work, having to resolve immediate, unexpected issues disrupts their agenda. They believe that if work is well thought out, firefighting can be minimized. And by being intentional about addressing potential issues up front, they find more creative solutions, have time to engage others and can develop ways to prevent things from going wrong.

For other people, nothing feels as good as putting out a fire, even if their own lack of planning caused the fire. And because they often get positive feedback for putting out the fire they created, their behavior is reinforced. Procrastinators often need the pressure of a deadline to kick into gear and get things done, and a firefight is just a deadline they didn't see coming.

All too often, organizations make heroes of the people who didn't think ahead, who caused a "situation," and then rode in on their fire engine, lights flashing and horns blasting. The people who work to avoid situations and who adopt a calm and systemic approach to their tasks often get overlooked. They are like air: it goes unnoticed when it is fresh and the right temperature. But let it get too hot or too cold or polluted, and we become very aware of it.

Until organizations reward the good leaders, who are organized and deadline driven, the fire starters will frustrate their colleagues and cause unnecessary drama in getting their work done.

Learning for Leaders – Recognize the people who avoid drama by planning and working strategically. When people stoke a fire, don't reward them for putting it out.

Coaches Corner – Help your workplace pyromaniacs learn to be more organized and adopt a structured approach to planning their work. Help them understand the negative impact their fires have on others. Help your people who are skilled in planning demonstrate how their process saves time and money and keeps the workplace from overheating.

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



Responsible Risk Taking

Risk provokes different emotions among different people. For some, risk-taking suggests excitement, challenge, learning, even joy. For others, it implies danger, fear, loss, and embarrassment. Effective leadership and learning inherently involve sticking your neck out when it may not feel comfortable. To be a successful leader you must strike a balance when it comes to risk, one that allows you to take on responsible risks, endure turmoil and conflict, inspire others and guard against pitfalls.

Risk is often in the eye of the beholder. In researching his book *Highwire Management*, my colleague Gene Calvert asked people if they were risk takers. They usually said no and would point to others they considered to be risk takers. Invariably those identified as risk takers were surprised by that label. They never felt what they did was particularly risky because they always thought through their ideas and developed contingency plans.

Choose Your Flavor

Risk also comes in different flavors. People may take physical risks — black diamond skiing, bungee jumping, swimming in shark-infested waters — or emotional risks, such as starting a new company, writing a book, or adopting a child. But rarely does a person feel comfortable taking risks in both realms. It's as if the two are mutually exclusive. Physical risk takers seem fatalistic about bodily harm but fear emotional failure. "If I dive out of a plane and my parachute doesn't open, I'm done," they would say. "But if I start a company and can't make it work, it will haunt me forever."

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