

# JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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## THE Learning Advantage



### Mobley's Musings— Rid Your Closet of Skeletons

I've noticed people holding on to past slights—situations where they felt misunderstood, disrespected, or unfairly attacked by a manager, colleague, direct report, or even a family member. The offending party may no longer be in their life or even alive, yet they continue to go to the back of the closet and pull out that skeleton along with feelings of anger, betrayal, and injury.

Skeletons are best buried. They should be left in the past, forgiven and forgotten. We can't change the past, but we can learn from it and make better choices. And with a dispassionate post-mortem of our role in the situation, we can avoid recreating it.

When we don't bury the skeletons, they continue to haunt us and keep us from building better relationships and making positive choices in our life.

Sandy



Sandy Mobley

### Ask Sandy

#### Remote Employees

A number of my clients appreciate the ability to work remotely, but they're also concerned that being out of sight means they're out of mind. They fear they may be overlooked when it comes to special project assignments and, compared to their on-site team members, they might not fare as well when it comes to performance and promotion discussions. They feel disconnected to the organization and want to know what they can do to raise their visibility and be better engaged.

One suggestion is to operate as if you were on-site, such as casually checking in with your colleagues as you would if you were walking past

their desk. In a brief phone call, email or instant message you might ask how they spent their weekend, what plans they have for an upcoming holiday, or whether they watched the football game last night. But it doesn't have to be small talk; ask how their work projects are going and whether there's anything they might need from you. Listen for ways you can contribute or help them. You can even set up regular check-in times with colleagues so you know you won't be interrupting. Being face-to-face via a video communication tool like FaceTime can help build the relationship.

It is also helpful to check in casually with your managers and business partners. Give them brief updates, inquire about any changes in the project or the business, and ask how you can help beyond your current assignment. Expressing interest in their perspective will go a long way to building a stronger rapport.

When remote workers join meetings on the phone or on video, many feel at a disadvantage compared to those physically in the room. Some meeting leaders may forget to involve the people calling in, making them feel like spectators. To head that off, send the leader a list of items you'd like to discuss ahead of time, possibly as an addendum to the meeting agenda. One organization has gone so far as to have everyone attending the meeting call or use video even if they are on-site so that off-site participants aren't disadvantaged.

If your work requires you to travel to other project locations, allow time in your visit to connect with as many people as you can when you are there. And to the extent that your company supports it, suggest having all project team members gather in person occasionally.

**Learning for Leaders** – Devote more time to your remote employees than your on-site staff. Keep remote workers connected by regularly asking for feedback and encouraging their participation. Lacking an office water cooler, they won't pick up on changes if you don't tell them.

**Coaches Corner** – Find out how your leaders are working with their remote staff and share best practices to make these relationships more effective.

If you have questions you'd like Sandy to address in future newsletters, email them to [sandy@learningadvantageinc.com](mailto:sandy@learningadvantageinc.com)



### Employee Engagement: Owners Versus Renters

A common coaching topic is how managers can encourage employees to take responsibility for their work. Some employees fully embrace their job, do it to the best of their ability, want to learn more and do more, help their colleagues, and are fully engaged. These are the direct reports most managers love.

Another group of employees focuses on the minimum. They'll do exactly what is asked but nothing more. For example, if you ask "minimalists" to make five copies of a document and put them into five binders, don't expect them to point out any typos or misprinted pages they might notice or to take it upon themselves to locate page dividers for the binders.

A third group of employees doesn't want to work, won't do what is asked, and make the workplace uncomfortable for everyone around them. If you have people in this category you should take steps to move them out as quickly as possible.

#### The Analogy of Housing

Using the analogy of housing, we could think of the three groups as owners, renters, and squatters. Owners take care of the home (or job), making no excuses and going out of their way to produce the best results. They are proud of what they do and eager to improve.

Renters on the other hand take care of the house (or job) enough to get their deposit back. They won't paint the walls or plant flowers unless it is for their benefit. They aren't interested in improving the house for someone else. And when squatters take over a property (or job) it deteriorates; whether they trash it or just don't take care of it, they leave it in worse shape than when they moved in.

#### Owners of the Job

Most of the clients I work with are owners on the job and they can't understand why others don't approach their work with the same zeal that they do. The challenge is to identify what's driving the mindset of renters and develop ways to turn them into owners.

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