

JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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THE Learning Advantage

Mobley's Musings– Up Front Attitude

Most people, if given the choice of sitting in the back of the plane or the front, will choose the front. Similarly, at concerts, theatre performances, and ball games, most people prefer to sit in the front rows. If it is so desirable to be up front, close to the action, in the preferred seats, why do people do just the opposite in business meetings, training classes, and conferences?

I find if I sit up front in a meeting it's practically impossible for me not to have an attitude of being present and engaged. I am more likely to ask questions and make comments from the front. If I sit in the back, I'm hedging my bets and keeping my options open, especially if I'm close to the exit. In the back, I'm more likely to check my phone and multitask, which further ensures that I won't get much out of the meeting.

Our attitude affects the outcome of everything we do, so by being present and intentional about what we can control we can have more positive influence. Time is my most valuable resource and one that I can't get more of. If I'm giving my time to an activity I plan to be fully present for it or I choose not to go. All in or all out – nothing in between.

Sandy



Sandy Mobley

Ask Sandy

Always the bad cop

You're working with a group from another department and have gotten some pushback from that group's leader. You don't feel you have the authority to address the problem so you go to your boss seeking his help to resolve it at his level. Your boss listens to your concerns then says, "I have confidence you can work it out. You have my full support." You're not sure if you should feel honored or suckered.

Later, you see your boss joking with Lucy, the admin who assists both of you. Your boss motions for you to step into his office. "Have you noticed that Lucy is forgetting to send out invitations to meetings?" he asks. You remind him that you raised this issue with him a month ago. "So then you have noticed," he says. "I'd like you to go talk to her and let her know it's not acceptable."

For several days your office Internet and phone service have been acting up, but your boss doesn't want to change service providers. Instead, he wants you to threaten the vendor that if service doesn't improve, their contract will be terminated. A week later you hear your boss bragging about the club-level tickets the vendor gave him to a playoff game.

What do you do if your boss insists on always being the good cop and making you the bad cop? Some bosses need to be liked and avoid conflict at all costs. It's not likely they will change, so your best option is to develop your influence and relationship skills so you can equitably resolve difficult situations. By delegating disagreeable tasks to you, your boss is handing you an opportunity to develop an important leadership skill that will serve you well in the future. And resolving these difficult issues will earn your boss's respect, especially if you accept the task graciously. Avoid getting annoyed that your boss ought to be handling these issues and recognize that all of us have strengths and development areas, even bosses.

Learning for Leaders – Look for ways to supplement your boss's skills. It will give you more experience and build a strong relationship.

Coaches Corner – Help clients reframe negative impressions of their boss into opportunities to learn and grow.

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



How do you drain the swamp when alligators are nipping at your heels?

Some of my clients find themselves in a catch-22. They don't have enough people or the right people to get the job done, but they don't have the time to recruit, interview, hire, on-board, and train the people who can get it done. In coaching sessions, they have many good ideas to get ahead of the curve, but they have no time to implement them.

When faced with a workload catch-22, there are a few steps you can take: 1) ruthlessly prioritize, 2) seek temporary help, and 3) develop a process to resolve the problem in the future.

Much has been written on prioritizing. Key ideas I've found effective are the following:

- ◆ Do those tasks that are important rather than urgent, unless the urgent is also important.
- ◆ Prioritize tasks that will get you leverage, such as hiring.
- ◆ Decide what can be delegated and ask staff to chip in with high-priority work.
- ◆ Ensure stakeholders know your priorities so they won't be blindsided when tasks are moved to the backburner.

Getting temporary help is a no-brainer for basic tasks that can be farmed out to temp agencies, contract workers, or interns. But it's also possible to obtain consulting help for tasks that require specialized skills and knowledge. Some clients have been able to augment their team's bandwidth by hiring MBA students during the summer. When bringing in short-term consulting help, it's important to clearly define the project scope and time frame for completion, otherwise short-term people may become long-term fixtures. With consultants you can request that they train whomever you hire to take on the work going forward.

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