



## THE Learning Advantage

### Mobley's Musings: Forgive and Forget

People make mistakes — that's part of being human. When a person fails and owns up to it, the best thing they could hear is "I forgive you." The worst thing would be hearing about the mistake repeatedly even after owning it, apologizing for it, and correcting the behavior so it won't happen again.

Some mistakes may be too egregious to forgive and lead to rifts in relationships. If you feel hurt or betrayed to that degree, wouldn't it be better to sever the relationship rather than be on guard constantly for a repeat performance? That option is problematic, however, when the person who hurt you is a coworker. Their lack of empathy, remorse, or a simple acknowledgment of what they did makes it hard to trust them and poisons the working relationship.

When a person believes they have done nothing to be forgiven for, it is hard to forget. Better to seek out colleagues who share your values and operate in a more nurturing environment, either within your organization or at a different one. Being part of a network of people who support each other makes your work life better and more satisfying.

Sandy



### Ask Sandy

#### What do people think? Spoiler alert: Ask them!

When clients are concerned about a meeting, relationship, or situation, some tend to "awfulize" it with negative thoughts about what other people must think of them. They say to themselves, "That meeting went so badly my boss probably doesn't have confidence in me" or "my colleagues must think I don't know my stuff."

The more they worry, the more they create a downward spiral that affects their work and emotional well-being, leading to poor performance, low self-confidence, and diminished self-esteem.

Much anxiety can be alleviated simply by asking other people for their thoughts in a neutral or indirect manner. You could ask your boss, "Will you give me some feedback on yesterday's meeting?" If she tells you the meeting went well, you'll realize your fears were unfounded. Or if she observed some issues, she may provide constructive feedback. Either way, you'll feel better because you know and can respond appropriately.

Similarly, asking other meeting participants and colleagues for feedback can clarify their perceptions and set you up for a productive conversation.

In his book *How Come Every Time I Get Stabbed in the Back My Fingerprints Are on the Knife?* Jerry Harvey explains how we unconsciously self-sabotage when we imagine a situation to be a certain way without getting input from others involved. Even if what they tell you is not positive, at least you have the possibility of learning from them and improving the situation. When the conversation is all in your head, that possibility doesn't exist.

**Learning for Leaders:** Review situations that didn't go as you expected and talk to others about what they experienced.

**Coaches Corner:** Give your clients tools to keep them open-minded and avoid being defensive during potentially difficult conversations.

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



### How to Deal with Conflict

I rarely hear people say they enjoy conflict. In fact I find most people go to great lengths to avoid it. But avoiding conflict rarely makes it go away, and the outcome can be worse than if it were addressed early. Conflict can be as simple as a misunderstanding or as difficult as a war over land.

How conflict is viewed makes all the difference in how it is addressed. Conflict can be healthy when different perspectives and viewpoints can be aired. Conflict can be harmful when the issues are personalized and people lack the skill to achieve resolution. Avoiding conflict leads to unresolved issues and inadequate solutions, so the time spent honing your conflict resolution skills is worthwhile.

Two key considerations in dealing with conflict are how much you care about the relationship you have with the other party and how much you care about the issue. The model at the end of this column, illustrates how these two elements can help you determine the right tactic.

If you don't care about the relationship or the issue, the best approach is to **Avoid** a conflict. For example, imagine you are at a department store looking at a number of scarves and you put one aside for consideration. As you look at other scarves, you notice someone has picked up the scarf you had set aside. You mention that you were thinking about buying that scarf, but the person who has picked it up says she wants it. You don't know the person, so the relationship doesn't matter. And you really aren't that committed to buying that particular scarf, so you say, "Go ahead and take it."

Now imagine you're fairly sure that scarf is exactly what you've been looking for, but the other person who has picked it up is a close friend. Even though you really want that scarf, you care more about your relationship with your friend than the scarf, so you choose to **Accommodate** and let her buy it without arguing.

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Importance of the Relationship (to you)	High	Accommodate	Collaborate	
	Low	Avoid	Compromise	Assert
		Low	High	
		Importance of the Issue/Goal (to you)		

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