



THE Learning Advantage

Mobley's Musings: Dare to Compare?

When my sister and I were kids we would compare how we were treated and what we were given, keeping a mental scorecard to make sure everything was fair and equal. The comparisons became difficult, however, when I would get a formal dress for Rainbow Girls, which she didn't join, or when she took piano lessons but I did not. How could we determine what was or wasn't fair?

I see a similar scorecard used in the workplace. People notice who is selected to go to conferences and who is promoted and they compare how they are being treated. If others seem to be getting more, resentment builds.

In reality, some of us do get more — or less — than others. But instead of insisting on everyone being treated exactly the same, it's helpful to take stock of your many blessings in absolute terms, not relative to others, and find contentment in them. When you see someone with something you desire or believe you deserve — like a promotion or project lead position — reflect on why you want it. Is it for your ego or are you thinking about how the role will help you learn and grow? If it's something you truly want, figure out how to earn it.

For all the people we see who have more, there are so many others who have less, be it materially, spiritually, or professionally. And there is no correlation between money, success, and happiness. Find your joy within and you will achieve more peace.

Sandy



Ask Sandy

Why should I spend time with peers?

Most leaders are keenly aware of the need to build relationships up (with the boss) and down (with direct reports) on the organization chart. But they tend to ignore peers across from them, missing the opportunity to develop allies and influence they may need to advance their projects.

Some organizations encourage and enhance peer relationships, but more often they don't. As a result, siloes form as peers manage their part of the organization and often optimize for their goals while not attending to overall company goals. And since most performance goals are individual, leaders have little incentive to help their colleagues, especially if their efforts aren't captured — or might even count against them — in the performance management system.

Strong relationships with peers make for a stronger organization. One client, Keri, demonstrated the value of peer relationship-building when significant problems were discovered shortly after two members of her organization's management team resigned. Keri reached out to help the now-leaderless teams. Although she was not an expert in their functional areas, she helped the teams diagnose problems, take corrective actions, and establish metrics to provide early warning signals of potential issues. When new managers finally were hired for the two departments, Keri helped them get up to speed — even sharing how best to work with their brilliant but cranky boss.

Because Keri took the initiative to help where help was needed even though it wasn't within her purview, she created a bridge with her peers that led to strong camaraderie across their teams. If Keri were to be promoted, her peers would agree with the move, citing her focus on the organization and interest in making others successful. As managers like Keri advance into senior leadership roles, the support of peers will only become more crucial.

Learning for Leaders: Consider your peer relationships. Which ones would benefit from more of your time and attention?

Coaches Corner: Ask your clients about how they work with their peers and help them develop strategies to strengthen their relationships.

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



Warding Off Energy Vampires

A colleague and I were discussing how some people give you energy while others drain the life out of you. At work, these "energy vampires" come in several guises:

- ◆ Whiners and complainers grumble about what's wrong but don't offer any suggestions for change
- ◆ Needy people constantly seek your affirmation and attention
- ◆ Blowhards and braggarts talk ad nauseam about their latest luxury trip or purchase
- ◆ Weed eaters and painstakingly precise people take forever to get to their point (assuming there is one)

Unlike traditional vampires, silver bullets, garlic and stakes through the heart are not appropriate deterrents for energy vampires. And I've found there is no single, sure-fire method that will ward them off. Each one requires a different approach, depending on the root cause of their sucking behavior.

For the whiners, I thank them for bringing the problem to my attention. But I don't let them off the hook that easily. "Come back to me when you have a solution and we can work on it," I tell them. After getting that response a couple times, they're less likely to complain.

For the needy people, I first determine whether I've given them the appropriate level of attention for the relationship. For example, with a valued business partner I discuss up front my expectations about how much time is needed for the relationship to work. If the partner still seeks attention, I look for ways to address his needs that don't require my time and presence. One partner valued being up to speed on new technology. By adding her name to the information technology department's updates, she was satisfied.

If staff members are constantly knocking on my door, I make sure they know how and when I will give them feedback and assure them that if they veer off track I'll let them know. If they still come to me for affirmation, I assume they aren't busy enough and give them more work. An added benefit to giving people more work is that it tells them I have confidence in their ability.

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