



Mobley's Musings: Take responsibility for mistakes

No one is perfect, and I tend to believe that people are doing the best they can at any given time. When I mess up, I admit it and apologize for it, I feel honorable. Then I do my best to make it right.

I have noticed that these days owning up to mistakes is sadly lacking in everything from politics to restaurants to home repair. The tendency to blame others does nothing to resolve the issue; it only seeks to shift accountability. Time spent arguing who is to blame would be better spent fixing the issue.

When someone messes up and doesn't own it, it leaves others wondering what else they've messed up and didn't acknowledge. Trust is eroded, and you're less likely to hire that person or want someone like that on your team. The effects linger, impacting the health of a team and the organization's ability to function at its best.

Take time to rectify missteps and don't forget to apologize. The two together are even more powerful.

Sandy



Ask Sandy

How much should staff know?

Managers seem to think they are helicopter parents, wanting to shelter their employees from the challenges that higher-ups are dealing with. But when employees are kept blissfully unaware of the numerous issues managers deal with they may adopt a cavalier attitude. Unconcerned about budget constraints, they may waste supplies. Unaware that a major client has chosen a new supplier and the sales pipeline is thin, they might anger an existing client with a thoughtless comment. And if they have grown complacent, they may deliver less-than-stellar work.

However, when managers show staff the bigger picture, they better understand how they contribute to — or detract from — company success. And they take more pride in what they do.

At a manufacturing firm that made nylon strands, employees had no connection to the products made from the fibers or how they were used. The management team organized a product fair so employees could see how the strands they made were used and how the quality of their work affected the final products. The staff found the displays enlightening and they enjoyed their work more.

At an all-hands meeting, a consulting firm presented a video of clients describing what the firm's staff did that they appreciated, along with a few things the clients wished were done differently. Their comments caused employees to feel more connected to the clients and take more care in their work.

To keep operating costs low, a small organization tasked a few employee teams to identify ways to reduce waste in office supplies. In researching the costs of supplies, the ordering process, and the distribution methods, the employees became more aware of how everyone can help contain costs. Some of the money that was saved was used to fund an employee picnic.

If employees never deal with challenges they miss out on opportunities to learn and grow — and help grow the organization.

Learning for Leaders: Show staff how their good work leads to company success. Help them find ways to improve the quality of their work.

Coaches Corner: Help leaders identify ways to show staff how their work affects the organization — both positively and negatively.

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



Getting Success Factors for Moving Up

Why is it some people continue to get promoted while others do not? In studying leaders for over 30 years, I've found a few differentiators stand out. Of course competence and job skills matter, but other factors can often make the difference.

Collaborative, Motivated Attitude and Approach

Attitude is critical. You can teach skills, but you can't teach attitude. A person with the attitude for success is self-motivated to do more, to be better, to make an impact, and to contribute to a positive working environment. Instead of complaining or gossiping, that person offers solutions and assistance when problems arise.

For example, when his team members complained about the difficulty of entering customer data into a new system, Adam asked for details. The fields were too short, they told him, so long names got truncated making the output difficult to understand. Realizing a solution was easy but needed to be implemented when the team wasn't using the system, Adam asked his IT contact to come in over the weekend to revise the system's code and test the new program with him. When the team came in on Monday, they were happy to see problem was solved.

Many people seem to enjoy grumbling about their jobs, but those with the attitude for success seek to improve, not knock, the workplace. They take it upon themselves to understand the problem, seek solutions, and help implement them.

Having an entrepreneurial approach to your job—thinking about how your work impacts others beyond your immediate area of responsibility—is another hallmark of a successful approach. Is there something you can do to add value and make work easier for your colleagues, other teams, and your boss? It can be as simple as identifying who else might benefit from information you have. We know we shouldn't let our leaders get blind-sided, but the same goes for our coworkers. And while some might say, "it's not my problem," it may be a perfect opportunity to demonstrate your interest in helping the organization—not just your team or your career—advance.

Finally, taking the perspective of successful people, you will welcome new opportunities as a chance to learn and grow, whether it's undertaking a new project, leading a project team, or even moving to a new department.

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