



## THE Learning Advantage

### Mobley's Musings: Are we busy or busy avoiding?

When clients aren't making progress toward their career goals, they sometimes tell me they are too busy. In peeling back their explanations, I discover that they are staying busy to avoid feeling certain emotions, such as fear. They may be afraid of failing in their pursuit or, more often, they're afraid of succeeding. Achieving that long-coveted promotion might mean they'll have to work longer hours, forfeiting family time as well as the ease they enjoy in their current role.

When I first started meditating, I found myself crying just a few minutes into the session. In the quiet of mindfulness, I realized how fearful I was of going it alone to build my own business. I wasn't sure I could succeed without the umbrella of a big organization to protect me. But recognizing the fear allowed me to take action to better secure my situation. I established a network of organizations that would call on me for contract work so if I couldn't find enough business on my own, I still had a safety net.

Once I faced my fear and took action, meditating became more soothing — no more tears.

Is there something you're avoiding by being busy? What are you tolerating? Spend some quiet time reflecting on those questions. I find it is always better to face a fear than avoid it. You'll develop strategies for improvement and dispel that nagging feeling of dis-ease.

Sandy



### Ask Sandy Explaining Past Mistakes

Working with large corporations and government agencies, I encounter clients who can't seem to shake a poor performance appraisal from the past. It follows them like a dark cloud, keeping them from taking advantage of opportunities in their organization. When asked about the situation, there is always a "story." One client told me, "I

had a boss who wanted things done a certain way. I learned his approach and did well. The new boss gave no direction and was constantly critical about what he didn't like. He gave me a bad performance appraisal." Another said, "I made one mistake in two years of superior performance and no one lets me forget it."

When leaders are deciding whom to hire or promote, a past negative performance appraisal makes it easy to eliminate a candidate in favor of someone whose performance may not be any better but who doesn't have a red flag in their file. It can take years and years of good performance to live down that one mistake.

What should you do if you have a bad performance appraisal? When applying for a new position or for promotion, get out in front of the situation by explaining what happened and what you learned from the experience. Do not blame others even if they were culpable. Blaming only tends to give more credibility to the negative appraisal. Provide evidence of improvement, noting that the issue has never come up again. The more you can show how a mistake led to learning, the less it may be seen as a mark against you.

If you don't proactively address the situation, hiring officers will come to their own conclusions; don't give them an easy out to reject you. Everyone has made mistakes in their careers — even hiring officers — so putting the mistake into context helps them identify with your situation. When you show that you've reflected on your performance, owned up to your mistake, and learned from it, it is more easily overlooked.

**Learning for Leaders:** Be proactive in helping employees reverse a negative perception. They will appreciate the support and stay on a positive trajectory in their careers. If you had a past mistake, fully own it, and learn from it.

**Coaches Corner:** Offer leaders tools to help them see beyond the surface of an evaluation and understand the value the person has to offer. If the leader had a past mistake, help identify the learning and subsequent success that came from the mistake.

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

**Click this link to hear insights on Finding Your Career Passion. Sandy Mobley is featured on the Over Fifty Starting Over Podcast.**

Podcast



### 5 Signs That The Thrill is Gone

If you're not paying attention it's easy to overlook telltale signs that you're not engaged in your current job. Changes happen gradually, then one day you realize that your job isn't fulfilling. Before the situation goes critical, look for these warning signs:

1. When you wake up in the morning you don't look forward to going to work
2. You're "phoning it in" at work — not thinking, just doing
3. Your staff are coming up with more creative ideas than you are
4. You've calculated the number of days, months, and years until you can retire
5. You're reporting to people who used to work for you

In coaching clients about ways to find more fulfillment from their jobs, I'm surprised that some have never asked themselves whether they're enjoying their work. Maybe they've decided the paycheck was worth more than fulfillment. Or they don't believe there's anything better for them. Maybe they're afraid to let go of what they have.

If you recognize yourself in those five warning signs, don't despair. Take time to think through what is missing in your current job. Then think about when you were last fully engaged in a job. Identify the factors that kept you engaged. Determine what changes you could make that would bring back that engagement. Perhaps a change in responsibility is what you need.

Ted discovered after his promotion that he was spending more time doing administrative work than the designing that he had loved. He had a conversation with his boss and they established a senior design leader role for him where he could focus on developing junior staff instead of managing reports. His satisfaction and enjoyment went up.

Another client, Richard, was unhappy because of a change in leadership. He described his previous boss as hands-off while his new boss was a micro-manager. In telling me about his relationship with his new boss he realized they had never discussed job expectations. When he met with his new boss to discuss expectations, she told him she had confidence in him and explained that her hands-on tendency was an attempt to learn more about the work from him so she could lead more effectively.

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