



Mobley's Musings: Getting By versus Getting Better

I have clients who don't enjoy or excel in their current jobs. They compensate for their lack of interest with ancillary activities – attending training, organizing office parties, or joining special interest groups – anything but what they were hired to do. Usually, their managers recognize that their hearts aren't in the work, but they'd rather keep them in the job than put them on a performance plan and eventually remove them.

As a leader, holding on to employees who cannot or will not engage in the work is not doing them, their coworkers, or you a favor. People tend to know when they aren't good at their jobs, and it can fill them with self-doubt and low self-esteem. Often their coworkers have to pick up the slack and may resent a mediocre coworker for blocking their advancement. An effective leader can help these employees recognize their strengths and interests and encourage them to find jobs that play to those qualities.

If you're the one who's disengaged from your job because it doesn't align with your skills or interests, you need to be honest with yourself. Recognize that you've reached a dead end and commit to exploring other possibilities. Holding on until you get laid off or fired won't put you in the best position to land a better job.

As enjoyable as those non-job activities may be, it is important not to shirk the responsibilities of the work your leader – who is paying your salary – hired you to do. Trust that there is a job that plays to your strengths and go find it.

Sandy



Ask Sandy

How to get employees to bring solutions

I hear managers complain about team members who excel at identifying problems but rarely come up with solutions. They run into the boss's office complaining about co-workers, vendors, other teams and expect their manager to solve it.

Successful managers want to develop staff problem solving and autonomy and turn to the employee with questions that make it

clear that the employee is empowered and expected to resolve the problem. Managers can ask, "What have you done to resolve the problem?" "Who can help you?" "Where might you go to find answers?" "How have you seen this problem solved in the past?"

What, where, when, and how questions encourage creative problem solving and are empowering. 'Why' questions tend to lead to blaming or defensive behavior. Many of us are triggered when asked why we didn't It may sound like a parent scolding us for not doing something well.

Asking questions can also help you diagnose where they are stuck and can lead to more targeted coaching. If the employee's only strategy when stuck is to keep trying the same approach, you can use questions to help them think of alternatives. If an employee's go-to solution is to ask peers for help and they are feeling burdened by it, you can help the person be more self-reliant. Or perhaps they need training or aren't cut out to do the job.

Asking questions to assess the situation will provide a wealth of useful information that can help you be a better leader.

Learning for Leaders: Don't provide answers without first assessing what problem needs to be solved.

Coaches Corner: Help your clients identify why their staff comes to them for answers and give them options to not become the Help Desk.

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



Networking Virtually

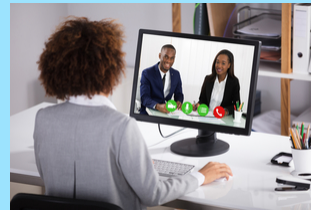
For many clients, networking was not something they especially enjoyed doing, but they found natural opportunities to connect with people in person. Now that COVID has forced networking into the virtual world, they're stumped as to how to go about it. Turns out, the way to approach networking virtually is not that much different than IRL (in real life).

The first step is to decide why you want to network. Being clear on your purpose makes the approach easier. For example, suppose you want to build a network of people in your company to advise you on ways to get buy-in for new projects. You'd identify people who are good at getting support for new projects and perhaps people whose support you're likely to need. Then send a short email explaining what you want from them and why you are seeking their help. Offer to set up a 15- to 20-minute phone or Zoom call at their convenience to discuss tips on obtaining buy-in.

During your call, make the conversation focused unless they are more personal and chatty. Just like with in-person meetings, take a cue from the other person as to how informal or business-like the conversation should be. Being respectful of the other person's time will mean they'll probably be willing to accept future requests for their input. After the call, send a short follow-up email thanking them for their time and noting what you took from their advice. Ask what you can do to help them. Showing a desire to make the help mutual can deepen the connection.

Maybe you are job hunting. Again be clear on what you want from the other person. Just like in sales, networking is easier with a warm introduction instead of a cold call. Once you've identified people who could assist your search, look for them on LinkedIn and note connections you have in common.

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