



THE Learning Advantage

Mobley's Musings: Think before you speak

I've noticed that with the many challenges imposed by COVID — isolating at home, wearing masks, social distancing, canceled social gatherings — people appear to be more on edge. This unease has been exacerbated by episodes of racial intolerance and violent political protests. In this charged atmosphere, an off-hand comment or joke that would have been overlooked is now seen as insensitive or insulting.

It makes me think about how someone who is suffering may not have the internal reserves to laugh at a joke or rebound from something that feels like a slight. Their usual sense of humor is suspended while they focus their energy on getting back to physical and emotional health. For them, light-heartedness is hard to muster.

I know how stress can expose our every last nerve endings and increase emotional sensitivity. While your own circumstances may shield you from today's stressors, keep in mind that many others are not as fortunate. Being more aware of how your comments may be heard can save you from unintentionally hurting others. And if your words do hurt another, it's best to apologize without trying to justify your comment. By listening to what the other person is feeling, you show caring and respect.

Taking time to think before you speak can save you from having to extract your foot from your mouth. It is very hard to walk back an insensitive comment. It's like the adage that ten attaboys can be wiped out by one oh-no. Don't let one moment of thoughtlessness defeat all your good intentions.

Sandy



Ask Sandy

How to reduce workplace drama

Far too many of my clients are struggling with far too much drama in the workplace. Whether it's interpersonal tiffs among employees or problems dealing with change, some people seem so addicted to drama they're compelled to create it if it doesn't exist.

Workplace drama reduces productivity and increases stress. There is nothing to be gained from putting people on edge. Instead of collaborating with co-workers, people feel they have to watch their backs, fearing they'll

be criticized or blamed by one of the drama leaders. For managers, dealing with situations that are manufactured wastes their time and derails their focus.

What can be done? When employees don't get along, I suggest the leader bring them together and make it clear that she expects them to work it out.

In one organization, two managers shared an office. One liked the room cold; the other liked it warmer. One complained the other spoke too loudly on the phone and he couldn't concentrate. She in turn complained that his music was too loud and she had to speak louder to stay focused. Their senior manager, frustrated by the bickering, laid down the law. "I need both of you on the team," she told them. "You each bring skills I value that would be hard to replace. But you two not getting along sets a bad example and disrupts the team. People feel they have to take sides and are pulled away from their work to hear what the other person did that you don't like." The senior manager then introduced me as her coach who would be facilitating a safe space for them to work through their disagreements. "If you cannot come to an understanding, one or both of you will have to go," she concluded. "I will not tolerate this behavior."

In the meeting, I asked the two managers to let go of the past and focus on what it would take for them to work together. Realizing that they cared more about keeping their jobs than complaining about their colleague, they came up with reasonable accommodations to work together.

When people are resistant to change and stir up fellow employees with their concerns, I use a similar approach that focuses on preferred outcomes. I ask the person what about the change concerns them. Often it boils down to the fear they will not be able to perform as well in the new situation. I remind them that the organization wants them to be successful and together we discuss what can be done to help them. First, they must be willing to try to make the change, so I ask if they see why the change is needed for the success of the organization. Understanding the importance of the change is often a strong motivator, and if they know the company will support them in making a change they become less fearful. Demonstrating that management is willing to work with them sets a positive tone. But if they can't learn the new skill or adapt to the change, they may need to find another employer, for the good of everyone.

For people who like to "stir the pot" and create drama, an organization with transparent communication makes it harder to introduce noise into the system. When people know they can trust what their leaders say, they aren't likely to believe gossip or alternative facts. And they know legitimate concerns will be addressed fairly.

As in most of life, being honest, clear, and transparent creates a healthy environment and allows people to thrive.

Learning for Leaders: Set the tone by promptly bringing the curtain down on workplace drama.

Coaches Corner: Ask your leaders how they handle drama in their organization and offer assistance in mediating quarrels.

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



Influence is More Effective than Authority

Some clients were frustrated when they found greater authority and responsibility did not lead to greater control. As their responsibility increased, their direct control decreased. They discovered that while their title may have given them authority, in the upper echelons of business, influence is the true coin of the realm.

Influence comes in various forms, and people typically have preferred styles. But the most effective influencers are like chameleons, adopting the style of the person they seek to influence—in effect, speaking that person's language emotionally and logically. Recognizing others' styles and mirroring them may improve your ability to influence them.

Some influence styles focus on uniting and collaborating while others focus on advocating. Discovery Learning, Inc., has developed a useful model and assessment tool that helps people determine their preferred styles and those that they under utilize. This article draws on that research.

Uniting Style

The styles that unite others are Bridging and Inspiring. Bridging involves others in the process and takes their ideas into account. Collaborative and engaging, Bridging is the style to use when there are many people in the process and it is important for them to feel their views have been heard. The downside is that taking others' ideas into account doesn't necessarily mean those ideas will become the solution. The result can be anger and misunderstanding if expectations are not well managed at the onset. Imagine constructing a roadway connecting two distant shores: Bridging takes time. Inspiring, the second uniting style, engages others by defining a view of what is possible. Think about John Kennedy declaring that we choose to go to the moon not because it's easy but because it is hard. Or Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech envisioning a day when people are judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. Inspiring highlights gifts in others that they might not recognize and motivates them to push themselves beyond their usual limits. It takes a certain personality to inspire and connect emotionally with others. The downside of the Inspiring style is that if those you seek to influence do not share the values and emotions you are calling on, your approach may have little impact.

Advocating Styles

The advocating styles are Asserting and Rationalizing. Asserting is stating your opinion or demand in a forceful way. To be effective the asserter should have formal authority or some degree of power that translates into action on the part of others.

READ MORE



WWW.LEARNINGADVANTAGEINC.COM

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove™

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.

View this email [online](#).

7200 Michael Place
Falls Church, VA | 22046 US

This email was sent to .

To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.