



Mobley's Musings: It's Not My Fault

When someone doesn't meet a deadline or fulfill a request, what I want to hear is what they are doing to get back on track and when the request will be completed. I'm not as interested in knowing why they missed the deadline as I am in learning how they plan to finish the job and in what timeframe.

When it comes to an explanation, the last thing I want to hear is blaming someone else. Finger-pointing means they aren't taking responsibility for their actions, and more than that, they're positioning themselves as a victim. It does not inspire confidence. By claiming they couldn't meet their goals because someone else didn't do their part, it means they lack influence skills, problem-solving skills, and project management skills. In no way would that make me let them off the hook. But it would make me think twice about assigning them important tasks.

[Sandy](#).



Ask Sandy: Is screen-to-screen as good as face-to-face?

A number of the leaders I coach are resisting coming back to the office and holding in-person meetings. They feel using virtual technology is sufficient for building relationships with their staff.

I asked how much time they spend on personal versus business conversations during their virtual meetings. Not surprisingly, most focused on business matters. They admitted they were giving the relationships short shrift, but felt virtual technology was still

effective. Some pointed out that virtual meetings give them a view into a person's home, kids, pets and hobbies.

Of course, fuzzy filters and virtual backgrounds mean they don't always get to see a staff member's personal space. And I questioned whether such impersonal interactions were sufficient to build strong relationships with staff and understand what motivates them.

Career discussions, in particular, may be less candid in virtual meetings. Imagine a staff member who's unhappy with their job and getting calls from recruiters. When their boss asks how they're doing, are they more likely to mention their dissatisfaction in person or virtually? When we were physically in the same office we knew intuitively that some things were better discussed face-to-face.

And how do leaders help staff connect with their teammates virtually? One of the statements in the Gallup Q12 survey for measuring employee engagement is "I have a best friend at work." When their connections are only virtual how likely are staff to develop a close bond with someone else at work?

For people who need more than just the work to make a job meaningful, working virtually has taken a toll. Managers who recognize the limitations of working virtually know they must focus more attention on building connections among their staff. They make sure to take time for personal conversations and to conduct training and team building programs that reinforce connections. I have facilitated a number of these virtual sessions, and the laughter and teasing I hear are heartening. People want to feel a sense of belonging after so many months apart.

If you notice engagement scores going down or attrition increasing among your virtual teams, it's time to get more intentional in building relationships and supporting their careers. And as restrictions ease, adopting a hybrid model combining in-person and virtual work may be the next step.

Learning for Leaders: Take stock of your relationship with each employee and what more is needed to make it stronger.

Coaches Corner: Help your clients evaluate whether they need to shift their approach to relationship building and perhaps consider occasional in-person meetings.

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



Is Your Job Still Fulfilling?

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.

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