



THE Learning Advantage

## Mobley's Musings– The rush to resolution

I have been amazed by the media and mind space devoted to Will Smith's slap of Chris Rock at the recent Academy Awards ceremony. What does our obsession with this incident say about us as humans? Why do we care about something that doesn't directly affect us?

Now that the Academy has handed down Will's "punishment" the story has reached its conclusion and people have stopped talking about it. To me, the episode demonstrates how an unresolved situation demands more of our attention than a resolved situation. This power of unresolved issues leads me to wonder whether we can shape situations so that people won't rush to closure but rather stay open to possibilities. For many of us, delaying resolution creates too much uncomfortable ambiguity and we feel the need to make a decision, even if it isn't ideal. But if we could tolerate a bit more uncertainty we might reach a better resolution.

Of course, we can't keep issues open too long. In a competitive world, delaying decisions and actions can have significant costs. The key is being able to assess whether we're moving too fast or not fast enough. Only then can we choose a course that best leads to a successful resolution.

Sandy



Sandy Mobley

### Ask Sandy

#### Learning From Our Mistakes

I find so many clients beat themselves up over their mistakes, failures, or missteps. Yet, I know of no successful entrepreneurs who didn't fail multiple times before they succeeded. Failing is part of learning, and anyone who takes risks is likely to fail. Have you ever perfectly executed something of significance the first time you attempted it?

How can you turn failing into learning?

A first step is to be gentle with yourself. The more you give yourself some grace, the less you are bothered by someone else's criticism. And by being kind to yourself you are likely to be kinder to others.

Next, consider instances when mistakes led to a better result. On more than one occasion when I was facilitating meetings or conducting training, things went wildly off track. The best I could do was acknowledge the derailment and take a break. I used the time out to find a way to refocus the group's energies on the session's goals and work more collaboratively. What seemed like a failure led to high engagement with the group and a better outcome.

After you've turned lemons into lemonade, don't stop there. Reflect on what you learned. What insights emerged from a mistake and how could you apply them in the future? All too often we hold on to our mistakes without acknowledging how we may have benefitted from them. If you can think of no learning or benefit from a mistake, at the very least you may have changed your behavior so it won't happen again. Not making the same mistake twice is indeed a good thing.

Next time you feel like you messed up, remember that in time something positive will likely come from it, even if it's just keeping you humble.

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



### Development Conversations: Have the Talk or Your People May Walk

One of my client organizations reviewed their exit interview data to better understand why people were leaving. Among the top reasons were not seeing a viable career path and not having development conversations with supervisors.

Employees expect and appreciate having discussions with their team leaders about how to grow and options for development. Often I find leaders struggle with what to say, but as my client discovered, avoiding these conversations can result in increased turnover.

Leaders should understand that when it comes to development discussions they don't need to have definitive answers at their fingertips. Helping their people think through options can be just as important, especially if an employee has no idea what their next step should be. In these situations, leaders should ask them what aspects of the current job they most enjoy and then probe more deeply into why they like them. Is it the problem solving, the customer interaction, or the opportunity to work on cross-functional teams? This process can provide clues to other options to consider.

Likewise, asking what aspects about their job that they don't like can provide insights. It's easy to assume that people working in the same team or function probably enjoy the same things about their jobs. I like lots of variety and detest routine work but was surprised that one of my managers was the opposite. While I had been giving her interesting new projects that I would have loved, she considered them annoying distractions from her main responsibilities.

As that anecdote illustrates, leaders should make it clear when the tasks they assign staff members are intended as development. When Sharon's manager, Erik, asked her to present their work at senior management meetings, Sharon thought Erik feared criticism and that he was "setting her up" to take any heat.

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