



THE Learning Advantage

Mobley's Musings— Be Present, Even in Vegas

I recently attended a Michael Bublé concert in Las Vegas. As good a singer as he is, he's also an amazing entertainer, telling stories and joking with the audience. Next to the stage on either side were tables where 10 to 15 people sat sipping drinks. They must have paid a lot for these seats and the opportunity to have Bublé dance with them, sing to them, and invite them to join him at the microphone. It was highly entertaining and looked like a lot of fun.

What surprised me was how these high rollers all had their phones out recording what was happening instead of enjoying being present with such a talented performer. I think they missed an opportunity to fully experience the event. But as my friend who was with me observed, "If it isn't on your cellphone, it didn't happen."

What is the goal of paying hundreds of dollars to interact with a performer? Is it to enjoy your time with the star or to show others that you were there?

Are you missing opportunities to be present with friends, family, and co-workers because you don't recognize the value of simply connecting?

Sandy



Sandy Mobley

Ask Sandy

How do I get honest feedback?

Often a client asks me to conduct 360-degree reviews with their bosses, peers, and direct reports. I gather the feedback and provide it without attribution so the client can focus on strengths and development areas rather than who said what.

Sometimes the leaders are surprised to hear about their strengths. For many, their strengths are so second nature to them that they take them for granted. And when they realize that others

value a strength, they are motivated to use it more.

But sometimes it's their development areas that surprise them. Nothing had been mentioned in past performance assessments, and previous employee satisfaction surveys only gave numerical scores, without comment sections. Some leaders insist they regularly seek constructive feedback, asking direct reports or peers where they need to improve or, in effect, what they're doing wrong. They're astonished to learn that questions like those can sound like a trap to employees! Don't dare tell the boss they're doing something wrong, they've learned through bitter experience.

By wording your request for constructive feedback differently, you may get a better result. You could ask, "If I were to do something differently to make it easier for you to do your job, what would that be?" or "Are there things I do that make it harder for you to do your job?" By changing the wording to focus on how you can work more effectively with the other person you'll get more concrete suggestions and the conversation won't sound like criticism.

Whenever you get feedback, be sure to thank the person and ask for ideas on what would work better for them. Don't attempt to justify why you do what you do; that will make you sound defensive and deter future feedback. And be sure you genuinely want feedback. If you are only going through the motions, your body language and tone of voice will indicate that you aren't serious.

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



The Power of Curiosity It May Kill Cats, but it Strengthens Relationships

In much of our life our competence is measured by our ability to provide answers. At work, we may feel that asking questions is a sign of weakness or incompetence. But thinking we must have all the answers, whether to save face or to project competence, can have negative results. On the other hand being curious won't kill us or our careers. In fact, asking questions keeps us from making costly mistakes and helps us build trust.

Asking questions has obvious practical benefits. Even when you think you understand a request, it's often helpful to ask questions to verify your understanding and fill in details. The last thing you want to do is complete a request only to discover you've misunderstood the assignment because you made assumptions that turned out to be unfounded. By clarifying intent, asking questions avoids misunderstandings, not to mention wasted time and energy.

And asking questions also can have subjective benefits because it indicates your desire to understand the other person's perspective and your curiosity about the subject. Think about when you've received an answer to a question. You may agree or disagree, but usually getting an answer brings an end to your thinking about the subject. However, when you're asked a question, you're encouraged to continue thinking about the subject, resulting in a deeper conversation and greater openness to the topic.

Soviet psychologist and psychiatrist Dr. Bluma Zeigarnik found that people remember incomplete or interrupted tasks better than completed ones.

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