



Mobley's Musings: "Heir"-ing Grievances

In his book *Spare* and on TV, Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, catalog a history of slights and betrayals, leaving few bridges unburnt. I can understand Harry and Meghan wanting to tell their side of the story. I sometimes hear the same desire from clients who were passed over for promotions or unceremoniously let go. They're eager to air their experience in a public forum. It rarely goes well for them.

No matter how evil the family, boss, or co-workers, publicly calling them out reflects as badly on the speaker as on those they are criticizing. We've all heard the saying, "when you point a finger at someone, three fingers are pointing back at you." In addition to betraying trust, airing grievances causes the targets to become defensive and poisons the possibility of any relationship in the future. And those who were not part of the complaint may fear that one day the accuser might point a finger at them too, leaving them publicly embarrassed.

Even with a \$20 million book deal, I have to wonder if the cost of airing grievances outweighs the benefit.



Ask Sandy Make People Want to Go to Hell

"Go to hell!" Roger barked when Larry, his direct report, suggested Roger's solution to a thorny problem was unlikely to work. Larry had heard this curt rejection from his boss before, and each time Roger would explain an important detail that Larry had overlooked. Instead of feeling demeaned, Larry was astonished by his boss's expertise. When Roger would tell Larry to go to hell, Larry felt grateful for the opportunity and was eager to go.

"Go to hell!" Harry roared at Clarissa, who had just told him she was unable to solve a complex technical problem. She knew her boss was not going to like what she had to say. She had endured his rants before and had concluded that he enjoyed belittling her. Clarissa had little respect for Harry even though his technical skills were much better than hers. She was relieved when Harry assigned the problem to another staff member.

Some people have no trouble telling others to go to hell. Their sharp criticism keeps everyone on their toes, though not many enjoy it. But others can tell you to go to hell and you appreciate their advice as if it's from a travel agent. What makes the difference?

Roger's ability to deliver a critical message in a way that others thank him for it keeps programs on track and associates working together. His criticism isn't meant to be hurtful, but there's no mistaking his message. People may not like what he tells them, but they respect that he knows what he's doing and is willing to share his expertise. To them, being part of Roger's team is worthwhile.

When Harry delivers a critical message he always seems to do it with more harshness — and perhaps a bit of glee — than needed. His staff does not seek out his advice because they know he will take it as an opportunity to denigrate their work.

People accept criticism when they know it comes from a desire to help them improve and when the message is delivered in a way that's not judgmental or hurtful. As drug companies know, people are more likely to take a medicine that tastes good than one that is hard to swallow. It's not necessary to sugarcoat a tough message but taking care in how it's presented can make it more acceptable.

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



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Don't Make Resolutions - Make New Habits

Haven't we all paved many roads to Hell with our good intentions? When I think of so many New Year's resolutions disregarded and goal setting gone awry, I wonder how it's possible to make any meaningful changes.

In his book *Atomic Habits*, James Clear explains that the key to change doesn't come from setting more realistic goals but rather by improving the process we use to achieve those goals.

Adopting Positive Habits

Clear recommends several techniques that can help us adopt new habits, including four that I've found most helpful:

*Habit stacking

*Changing your view of yourself

*Making the new habit easy

*Measuring success realistically

Habit stacking. The idea behind habit stacking is that linking a new habit to a habit you have already integrated into your routine will make the new one stickier. For example, if you want to devote time each day to meditation, you could link it to your morning routine of brushing your teeth. Start by adding five minutes of meditation after brushing and flossing, then little by little, the period of quiet reflection becomes part of your routine. Or suppose you always take your dog for a walk in the afternoon. Use that habit to support your goal of exercising more by taking your dog on longer walks, walking faster, jogging, or even running. Your dog may even thank you for your new exercise routine.

Changing your view of yourself. In order to adopt a new habit you may need to think about yourself differently. Associating with a group of successful entrepreneurs can help you to see yourself in their roles, developing the identity and habits that support your own success. Whether you want to run in a marathon some day or travel to exotic lands, you may need to let go of stories you tell yourself — that you're not athletic or not adventurous enough — so you can adopt habits to achieve your goals.

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