



Mobley's Musings: Why the Hate?

When I hear people say they hate traffic, doing their taxes, or going grocery shopping, I wonder why they give so much power to something that just is what it is. Why not accept the reality of traffic, taxes, shopping, and myriad other annoyances and make the best of them?

Claiming to hate something makes dealing with it that much harder and adds to the negative energy already surrounding it. To counteract the bad vibes, I look for ways to break a chore down into small tasks and give myself rewards for completing each. For example, when I finish the business expense portion of my taxes, I will have a cup of tea and read something I enjoy for an equal amount of time. Little by little, all the tasks get done, and the rewards make it bearable.

Another way to deal with something you don't enjoy is to find a way to make it easier. One client swears by online grocery shopping. She creates her shopping list online and specifies when she wants it delivered. While there's a fee for the service, it's worthwhile to her because it means no more trips to the store, and she has what she needs when she needs it.

If traffic is your *bête noire* (literally "black beast"), figure out ways to minimize the pain. Perhaps you can avoid traffic by doing your commute at an earlier or later time. If you left home early, you could hit the gym before work. Alternatively, you could exercise after work and head home once the traffic thinned out. Many people rely on the app Waze to find traffic workarounds, but the reality is traffic isn't likely to change; it's up to you to find ways to make it more tolerable.

With a little creativity you can find solutions to unpleasant tasks and hating only stymies your creativity.



Ask Sandy How can I think more strategically?

Many clients wish they could do more strategic thinking — intentionally and critically analyzing their organizations with an eye for the big picture rather than focusing on the tactics of everyday operations. But developing a strategic vision can take time, which is often in short supply. And even if they have time, many find themselves spinning their wheels without a process in place.

That's where a template of key areas to consider comes in handy. It offers structure and efficiency to a strategic analysis. One well-known template is the SWOT analysis, listing an organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The SOAR framework is more strengths-based, focusing on Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results. These templates are just guides; you can certainly tailor them or create your own to reflect where you want to focus your organization.

If your skills and experience are more tactical, use that strength to stretch into more strategic modes. For example, when you think about what tactics are successful in your area, imagine what could make them even better. Think about what changes could produce results faster, easier, cheaper, or higher in quality. What changes would increase customer satisfaction?

Engaging others in your analysis can help you step back from everyday challenges and think more broadly. Because they aren't invested in the ways things are, their fresh eyes can help you see new ways to approach old problems and identify promising opportunities.

Researching and comparing how other parts of your organization — or other organizations in your industry — have developed and implemented their strategic visions can spur your own thinking. You can find many books and articles on strategic thinking, but asking colleagues about their approach will often result in more concrete and relatable best practices.

While some people are naturally more strategic, anyone can develop the ability with time, intention, experience, and a willingness to be open and curious. Years ago, Hewlett Packard ran a series of commercials with the theme "What if?" showing people experiencing "eureka moments." Whether in the shower or on a shop floor, they asked themselves, "What if we did *this* instead of *that*?" By looking at things differently and creatively, we can all become better strategic thinkers.

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



How to Make Your Boss Your Champion

You've probably heard the phrase "managing your boss," which has always seemed a bit unfriendly to me, like you're barely tolerating the relationship. Rather than managing your boss, imagine making your boss your champion. How great would it be if they acknowledged and celebrated you? Turning a boss into a cheerleader may not always be possible — for reasons ranging from their personality to organizational culture — but when circumstances appear favorable, pay attention to the building blocks of a strong working relationship.

Reach out and connect

If your boss doesn't make an effort to get to know you, it's on you to find a way to connect, whether it's through personal interests, such as golf or cooking, or work-related matters. Most bosses like to be in the know, so sharing information informally on a current project can give them on-the-ground insights they can recount with their peers. Other work-related ways to connect include offering to take on special projects or volunteering to represent your department on company-wide initiatives. Your interest in supporting your boss's organization will strengthen your connection and provide a good networking opportunity for you.

Keep in mind that forming a close connection with your boss obligates you to keeping their confidences. When speaking with other people, do not share information you've gained from your boss that would not be common knowledge. If your boss is to become your champion, they need to know you can be trusted.

Match their communication style

Senior managers and leaders appreciate it when you recognize how they prefer to deliver and receive communications and then endeavor to match their style. Variables include preferences for the big picture versus detail, verbal or written communication or some combination of both, and frequency of communication. But just about every boss embraces the "No Surprises" rule. Whether they are delivering or receiving a message, they want expectations set and the path prepared for negative or difficult communications.

Equally important is understanding the reason for your boss's communication. An extroverted boss may prefer to talk through ideas before coming to a decision; they're seeking possibilities, not giving marching orders. I have wasted time acting on something my boss said when she was still considering options and wasn't ready to proceed.

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