



## Mobley's Musings: From Wonder Woman to Wonder Bread

I remember whenever I started a new job, I'd get lots of positive feedback. My new managers would take me around to meet other leaders who said they were impressed by my credentials and were excited to have me on board. I felt like Wonder Woman, eager to change the world with my golden bracelets. But my shiny-new-object status typically only lasted about a year or until a new shiny person joined the organization.

In the space of a year, I'd gone from Wonder Woman to Wonder Bread — a comforting staple, nothing special, no longer exciting. What had changed? I was the same person they were excited about a year or so ago, but now my skills were taken for granted and uncelebrated. It made me want to find another job where I would be appreciated.

Of course, this phenomenon occurs in lots of areas. When something is new, we are much more excited about it than when we become used to it. I was positively giddy when I bought my first new car; ten years later, the thrill was gone even though the car was still performing like a champ.

When it comes to managing talent, be careful not to let familiarity breed complacency or you'll risk taking your people for granted. Let them know they matter, that you value their skills and your relationship with them. Shiny objects may dazzle, but it's the workhorses that deliver.



## Ask Sandy How to Fight FOMO

Born of social media, FOMO (fear of missing out) is the obsessive need to be involved in anything someone else is enjoying. In the workplace, FOMO is evident in people who insist on being assigned to every important project and committee. Often these same people complain that with all the meetings they have to attend, they have little time to do their actual work. And because they are spread so thin, they often don't get as much out of the meetings, nor are they as well prepared to make a meaningful contribution.

If you find yourself tempted to jump into every interesting project, conference, seminar, or meeting, it's important to take stock of the cost of workplace FOMO.

When I'm asked to speak to associations and at conferences, I always evaluate the benefits and the costs. Does the group or event align with my goals and interests? Will my involvement help promote my business? Will networking opportunities be fruitful? How much time will it take me to prepare for the speaking engagement or design a tailored workshop?

If you're invited to participate in a meeting, ask for an agenda ahead of time to determine whether you're the right person or if one of your direct reports could attend. Ask the meeting organizer what they expect from you at the meeting. That knowledge can help you to prepare and provide useful contributions, but it could also indicate that you're not the right person to attend. You may not even have to attend if what the organizer wants from you can be provided with documents, graphics, or slides.

Before you commit to attending a conference, review the agenda and assess how it may benefit you. Look at the conference's breakout sessions and map out ahead of time which ones you want to attend. If fellow colleagues will also be attending, you can coordinate your session plans and schedule time to get together. If you're looking for specific information or networking opportunities, ask your colleagues to help you connect.

Be clear about your goals and the benefits of taking on an engagement, and don't let FOMO blind you to the cost of participating.

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



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## Dealing with Difficult People

You'll find many different personality types in any organization. Most people are helpful, cordial, and easy to work with. But every now and then you're sure to encounter a personality type that is hard to work with. Since you're probably not going to change these people, the best way to be effective is to recognize their type and adapt how you respond to them.

### Aggressive and/or Condescending

Sometimes these people come from organizations where aggressive or competitive behavior is encouraged. Stock traders, for example, are expected to be aggressive. Some may have learned they're more likely to get their way if they come on strong, and others may simply lack the self-awareness to know how they are coming across.

You will be most effective with this personality type if you are calm, centered, and unflappable. In conversations, do your best to ignore their aggression and stay on message. If their behavior becomes egregious and they start yelling at you, you can say, "I would like to discuss this with you; will you please lower your voice?" If the person continues to yell, your best option may be to end the conversation. But don't let them off the hook; tell them you will resume the discussion later when it can be conducted at a lower, more appropriate volume.

### Placaters

Placaters will agree to just about anything to make others happy, but often they can't deliver because they're overcommitted. Because of their inability to say no, you can't trust that they will come through for you. One way to deal with them is to inquire about their schedule and whether they'll have time for your work. Give them permission to decline the work by letting them know you can ask someone else to do it. If they insist they have the time, give them an earlier due date than you need and check in on their progress along the way. It may be underhanded to misrepresent your schedule, but if you have been burned by a placater before, you know you have to do whatever is necessary to make sure they get the work done.

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