

# JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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THE Learning Advantage



## Mobley's Musings: Good Versus Excellent

I was telling my chiropractor, Dr. Anne Sorrentino, how much I appreciated her whole-body approach to working with me. She analyzes my gait, only adjusts where it is needed, and provides me with exercises to maintain the correction. I have had good chiropractors, but she is several levels above anyone else I worked with; she's truly excellent.

She told me her father taught her the difference between good and excellent with a parable. Please pardon any cultural insensitivities; I think you'll get the point.

While sitting outside his tent, Ahab observed a caravan going by. He asked his assistant, Omar, to find out where they were going. Omar rode his horse to the caravan and quickly returned to report that they were taking their wares to sell in Egypt. Ahab asked him what they were selling. Omar again rode out to the caravan, which had progressed further down the road, so it took him a little longer to return and report that they were selling rugs. Ahab asked how many they were selling. Once again Omar rode out and this time it took him much longer to return with the information that they had 100 rugs. Ahab asked what price they were asking for the rugs. Omar chased the caravan across the desert, learned they were selling the rugs for 50 shekels each and, after a long ride back, told Ahab the price.

On the other side of the desert, Mohamed was watching the same caravan go by and asked his assistant, Amir, to go find out where the caravan was going. Amir rode his horse to the caravan then came back and told Mohamed it was going to

## Confidence Building Tools

In many conversations with my clients it becomes clear that their confidence lags behind their competence. What good is being talented if you don't believe in yourself?

People who lack confidence can hinder their own career success by deferring to others, withholding good ideas, and avoiding taking on greater responsibility. They are often racked by the sense that they are imposters—they aren't as smart or creative or accomplished as others think they are—and any day they will be found out.

I find that people who lack confidence tend to focus on the negative—what they don't know or didn't do—and give it more weight than what they have accomplished. And they may compare themselves with others. Comparisons aren't useful: we can always find someone who does

Egypt to sell rugs, that they had 100 rugs and each one cost 50 shekels.

Omar was good, but Amir was excellent. Amir thought beyond Mohamed's initial question to gather information he expected Mohamed would want. How can we be excellent like Amir? When you are given an assignment or receive a request, consider the ultimate intent of the request, think holistically about the task, and explore ways you can add value to what was asked of you to deliver excellence.



## Ask Sandy

### Does My Leadership Style Need to Change?

Many clients who've been successful using a particular style of leadership in the past wonder whether it's still appropriate. Does their leadership style still work for a company that's reinventing itself? Should they adjust their leadership style to meet new hybrid working arrangements? Will their leadership style engage millennial and Gen Z staff members or turn them off?

To better understand their situation, I ask what's causing using them to question their leadership style. Some report getting low scores on employee surveys while others point to high attrition or lack of employee engagement. Any of these are cause for concern.

Conducting 360-degree interviews can help determine what is working and what areas need improvement, including leadership style. In one set of interviews, I learned that the leader's commanding style made staff feel he wasn't interested in their ideas or feedback. Staff who had offered feedback said the leader was open to it because they'd been brave enough to reach out to the leader. Others acknowledged that they didn't offer feedback because they were unsure about how the leader would respond. Upon receiving the results from the 360 survey, the leader made a point of asking for feedback often so all would know he was open to it.

things better, and finding someone who doesn't do things as well doesn't make us feel any better.

In their book *The Confidence Code*, Katty Kay and Claire Shipman note that people who are confident are seen more positively even when compared to people who are more competent but lack confidence. They argue that women face more hurdles when it comes to projecting confidence compared to men. Women often assume more culpability than men when things go wrong. And when things go right, they tend to credit circumstance or luck rather than their skills or performance. As girls, women tend to be rewarded for being "perfect" while boys are encouraged to be "courageous." But the difference in responses may be more about nature than nurture.

Women have more of the hormone estrogen which makes them nurturing. Men have more testosterone which leads to risk taking.

Regardless of gender identification, we can all benefit from building and projecting confidence, and that means developing strategies to combat the main causes of low confidence: poor self-image, negative self-talk, and the inability to forgive oneself for past mistakes.

#### Poor Self-Image

In another set of interviews, I heard a leader described as a micromanager. Staff members and direct reports explained that she was very prescriptive with standard operating procedures for everything they did. They felt their creativity was being stifled. After learning of these concerns, the leader realized she had not adequately communicated to her staff how critical their work was. Her team worked in data security and a small mistake could lead to many bad outcomes. But she recognized her team was bright and talented; stifling their ideas would seriously affect morale. Her solution was to establish a safe staging environment that would let them test their ideas before moving them to the production environment. Not only did this approach allow the staff to identify holes in their work that could cause vulnerabilities, it led them to better appreciate her meticulous standards.

Keep in mind that one leadership style may work for one team but fail utterly with another. At one company I was fortunate to lead a high-performing team. I set the vision and let them run with their ideas. The outcomes and engagement were great. But when I applied the same approach at another company where the team was not as competent or mature, it didn't take long for me to realize that one style does not fit all. For this team to succeed I had to be much more hands-on, offer more detailed guidance, and more closely supervise them.

If you think your leadership style might not be meeting the needs of your team, ask them to describe how they prefer to work and what you can do to support them. Then do a self-assessment of your behavior to determine if your leadership style needs some fine tuning. If your preferred way of leading doesn't mesh with your team, you'll need to become more flexible. And you could try meeting them in the middle — adjusting your style to suit their needs, while working to develop them into the staff that better matches your style.

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



Poor self-image can be shaped by criticism early in life. Children who were criticized or bullied at school may develop low self-esteem based on what they think other people think of them. It's hard to escape high school unscathed, but it's important to recognize that it was an equal-opportunity ordeal. Whether you were too short or too tall, too fat or too skinny, a "brain" or a "blockhead," a pretty boy or greaser, airhead cheerleader or plain Jane, the list of taunts was endless and there was something for everyone.

As adults we can look back at that experience and wonder why we ever let it bother us. But the reality is those seeds of negativity can linger into adulthood. Do nicknames and taunts still have power over you?

Whatever the cause of a poor self-image, the first step to repairing it is to recognize the negative thoughts you are holding about yourself and make a conscious decision to let them go. When you look at yourself with adult eyes, you'll see the things you were teased about in the past were inconsequential; in some cases they may have become gifts.

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