

# JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

August 2023



## Mobley's Musings: Leaving the Door Open

A client had been working on a project with a leader for over a year. While they came from different functional areas and brought different perspectives, she felt their conversations were instructive and usually resulted in better decisions. But after the project ended, she noticed a coldness when they saw each other, and he often avoided eye contact. This disturbed her because she works hard to build strong relationships.

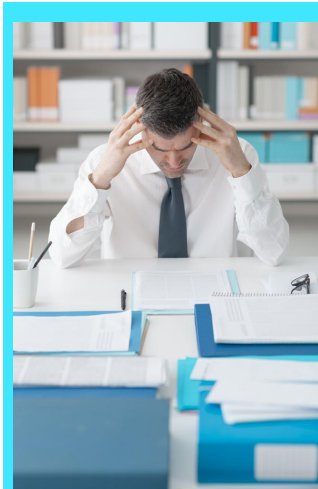
She decided to send him an email telling him how much she had valued their collaboration and expressing concern that he seemed displeased with her lately. She told him she'd like to address any issues he might have and clear up any misunderstandings. Whether he reaches out or not, she feels at peace.

Do you have regrets or unresolved relationship issues? Make an effort to reach out. You will feel better knowing you've taken steps to improve the relationship.



## Ask Sandy How do poor leaders manage to keep their jobs?

Among the top gripes that employees cite in satisfaction surveys is lack of accountability for



## Got the Middle Management Blues?

In many organizations, being in middle management can be rewarding and fun. You are close to the business, have lots of contact with customers, and are leading a team of strong performers. You get to keep your hands in the work while also being responsible for setting direction and leading the effort.

But for some leaders who've been unable to move up, middle management can feel like being stuck in purgatory. In coaching leaders at this level, I explore reasons why their career has hit a plateau. The conversation can be uncomfortable, but it's important to be clear-eyed and honest. If

leaders who underperform or treat staff badly. It's frustrating for employees to see these leaders continue to receive cushy perks and bonuses knowing how awful they are to work for.

How do these leaders get away with it? It may come down to office politics. The toxic leader may have powerful connections or a unique expertise that the organization values more than leadership skills. Or they may have friends in high places who are reluctant to send a good buddy packing even when they know they aren't good leaders.

Sometimes senior management may not be aware of a leader's poor behavior, especially if the person is always positive and polite to their boss. If staff members don't complain — out of fear of retribution or because prior comments have not changed matters — the higher ups may have no idea the leader is a terror to their direct reports.

When a leader's bad behavior is noticed, senior management may impose a performance plan with goals for change. Sometimes that's enough for the leader to clean up their act. People can change and I'm all for giving them a chance to do so, but for only so long.

What can you do if you end up working for a poor leader? You can always wait it out and think of the leader as a learning opportunity in what not to do. You could look into transferring to another department or quit the organization altogether. If you enjoy the work and your coworkers and would like to stay where you are, you could lodge a complaint with your Human Resources department. If you'd rather not take the risk of filing something formal, see if your mentor can guide you. Your mentor may be able to alert senior management or HR through back channels about the leader without your having to report it directly.

Most importantly, don't take their behavior personally or let it undermine your confidence. Until you can find a better situation, stay positive, do the best job you can, and find opportunities to improve your circumstances.

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

you're wondering why you're stuck singing the middle management blues, consider the following possibilities.

**Lack of (perceived) competence.** As hard as it may be to accept, sometimes people lack the skills to lead at a higher level. Perhaps you are a great middle manager who does well with a smaller team, but you struggle with work that involves more complexity, larger scope, or a bigger team. If you do have the skills, you may find yourself in a Catch-22: not being able to demonstrate your skills because you're never given the opportunity to do so.

**Haven't asked for promotion.** Some of my less assertive clients think good work speaks for itself. If only! If you aren't able to ask for what you want, the answer is always no.

**Haven't taken the tough jobs that show readiness for promotion.** Taking a pass on challenging assignments like leading an acquisition, joining a reengineering project, or volunteering for a task force is a missed opportunity to showcase your abilities. When something comes up, be sure to raise your hand.

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