

JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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THE Learning Advantage

Mobley's Musings: Keeping your cool when you are feeling the burn

Have you ever been so upset by something that you feel it physically? Maybe you feel your face flush, or you hear your voice getting louder. Perhaps the classic flight-fight-freeze response kicks in making you want to flee, attack, or remain petrified in place. Such visceral reactions usually indicate that you are deeply invested in the situation and fear that things won't turn out well.

It is perfectly normal to feel strong emotions. What is important is to manage those emotions in a way that is productive, and that begins with acknowledging them. Holding in your emotions can increase stress levels and potentially lead to stomach ulcers or other maladies. And you never know when buried emotions will erupt into anger and yelling, making a bad situation worse.

After acknowledging the gravity of your emotions, step away from the situation. Take time to calm down and look for a constructive way to deal with the issue. If you have difficulty calming down, find safe ways to release energy — maybe go for a run, beat a pillow, yell and scream (just make sure no one's within earshot). In one job, when my work friend and I would get frustrated, we would get in her VW bug with the windows up and drive down the highway yelling. We came back to the office feeling much better — though a bit hoarse — and ready to tackle the situation.

Next, identify the cause of the emotion. Are you reacting to something about yourself, another person, or the situation? A dispassionate analysis will help you decide the right course of action. And any solution you come up with while you are calm



Engaging Questions

Some senior leaders I coach are troubled that their staff appear intimidated by them. But it's not because of their behavior, they contend. They genuinely want their people to engage, push back, and offer feedback when they present ideas, but it seems their title and position prevent staff from speaking freely.

When I ask these leaders how they try to solicit input they note how they end a presentation by asking "Does that make sense?" or "Was that clear?" But these questions could imply that anyone who doesn't think the ideas make sense or were clear must not be very bright. Instead of inviting comments, these questions only seek a yes or no answer. If all the leader gets in response is nodding heads, can they really be sure that what they said made sense or was clear?

will produce a better result than when you are upset.



Ask Sandy

Is it better to inspire rather than "pushing" your team into productivity?

Recently clients have been bringing up the topic of how to push their managers or telling me that unless they push, they don't get great performance from them. This causes me pause. I have never responded positively to being pushed. In fact, pushing tends to demotivate me. What I like is to be inspired. My best leaders have been visionary and their view of what was possible motivated me to have big dreams and reach for the stars. Their high bar for excellent performance made me want to do even more.

As I reflected with my clients on what they meant by push, they described wanting managers to have higher goals and accomplish more, but they didn't know how to do it in an inspiring way. The vision seemed so clear – almost obvious to them. The ability to envision possibilities and improved performance was a signature strength of theirs that not all the managers shared. We worked together to create a story of what could be accomplished and how the managers were an integral part of that success. For many of their managers, the compelling story was just what they needed to take the steps my clients wanted.

Another group of managers did not seem motivated by the story. They understood the possibilities, and they could see how improved performance mattered, but their behaviors didn't change. We probed further and found for some, the connection to the work wasn't strong. They were just doing a job to feed the family and the higher purpose didn't matter. This provides an interesting dilemma for the leaders. Do they keep people who are doing adequate work or let them go and hire people who want to be part of the vision? It depends. If the people are effective in their roles, the leader might be fine leaving them in place. But, if

Rather than ask yes-no questions to solicit feedback, I suggest these leaders ask open-ended questions, such as:

- What's your takeaway from what I just said?
- How did what I've presented land?
- How does this idea work for you?
- What should I be concerned about:
- What questions do you have?
- If you were in my position, what might you do differently?

I also remind leaders that they have a thorough understanding of their own ideas — they know the context, the desired outcome, and maybe even potential options for achieving it. But when speaking to others about it, they may unintentionally leave out essential information, which hinders others from fully appreciating the particulars of the ideas. Furthermore, some people aren't comfortable responding on the spot. A better approach may be to say, "Take a little time to think about what I've presented and what I'm looking for from you. We can reconvene this afternoon to discuss ways to move forward and what additional information you need." Allowing people to digest an idea or a request and

they influence others and aren't excited about and aligned with the vision, maybe they are better without them. If your managers aren't on board with your vision, do they detract from the success of the operation? If so, you are better off finding people who want to be part of the success of the team.

Learning for Leaders – When hiring, spend time understanding what motivates prospective employees. Do they want a job or a career? Do they see meaningful connection to the work of the organization?

Coaches Corner – Ask your clients to share their vision with you. Help them make it compelling and engaging for others.

If you have any questions you'd like Sandy to address in future newsletters, email them to:
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identify gaps in their understanding helps ensure everyone is on the same page and saves time in the long run.

When working with leaders who are sharing a vision for the organization or a change process, I suggest they present it to their whole team together and then break into groups of four or five where they address these questions:

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