

# JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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## Mobley's Musings: Nullifying Naysayers

It's a fact of life: Some people look for faults. No matter how hard you try to succeed, the naysayers will find something to criticize. The trick, I discovered, is having your own standards for evaluating yourself. That way you can accept feedback without being hurt by it.

When I was nervous before making a keynote speech, one of my coaches told me that 97 percent of the audience would be pulling for me. No matter if I lost my place or forgot something, they wanted me to succeed because they wanted my speech to be enjoyable. They'd even look for reasons to praise me. But she said 3 percent of the group will want me to fail. They'd pick apart the content, criticize how I spoke or carp about what I was wearing. They would always find something they didn't like. So, in pleasing the 97 percent, I would actually be pleasing 100 percent.

That insight gave me lots to think about and reframe where I put my energy. No reason to work hard to please the naysayers; they won't like anything because they don't want to be pleased. They want to find fault! Better to focus my energy on the people who want me to succeed and put forth my best effort for them.

Funny thing about naysayers: They love to tell you that you didn't meet their standards. But they don't share their standards or, if they do, they change them whenever it suits their needs. It reminds me of the donkey trying to reach a carrot dangling ahead of it on a long pole. The goal is always just out of reach.

When you find yourself trying to please constantly critical people, pull back and do your own self-



## Finding the True Goal

### Whose Goal Is It Anyway?

Have you ever had your heart set on something, but when you got it you wondered what you were thinking? When coaching someone, I ask about their goals. Sometimes they tell me what they *think* their goals should be, but they're not really what they want. What is it that they truly have their heart set on?

To identify true goals, I ask three questions based on a technique described by Lisa Marshall and Lucy Friedman in their book: *Smart Work*:

- What is it you want or need?
- What will achieving it get you? Ask repeatedly until the real goal is uncovered.
- When you get what you want or need, what will you see and hear, and how will you feel?

assessment. If you did your best, that is good enough.



## Ask Sandy Even Introverts Can Speak Up!

My introverted clients sometimes get feedback that in meetings they don't seem engaged, interested, or have an opinion. Nothing could be farther from the truth. They are listening, thinking, and problem solving, but by the time they connect the dots and are ready to contribute to the discussion, the group has moved on to the next topic.

To better prepare for and contribute during important meetings I recommend these clients ask for agendas in advance. When an agenda item touches on their area of expertise, I suggest they make time beforehand to jot down key bullet points so they can easily and knowledgeably discuss issues, priorities, and successes related to the topic.

One way I have found they can increase their comfort level when speaking during meetings is to have them refer to the previous speaker's point, compliment their contribution, and then build on it. They might say, "Dashon, thank you for your ideas to accelerate development. They are useful. In my area I see . . . ." By prefacing their remarks with a nod to a previous contributor, the group will remember what they said and that they had a positive impact on the discussion.

Being an introvert has many benefits. Introverts tend to be excellent listeners, notice details others miss, and when they do speak, their ideas are well formed and supported. Introverts can showcase these strengths by preparing to contribute ahead of time.

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

I used this process with a senior manager at a large accounting firm. He told me his goal was to become a partner. Having coached many partnership-track leaders, I knew the requirements and what was expected to get there. I could have stopped there and begun coaching him on next steps, but something wasn't ringing true about his goal, so I continued with the next question.

"What will becoming a partner in your firm get you?" I asked. My client said he would have more free time and more choice in the kind of work he would take on. Based on my experience with senior leaders, I knew that becoming a partner was not likely to give him what he wanted.

Repeating the second question, I asked what his goal of more free time would get him. He said he owned a small plane and in order to maintain his pilot's license he needed to log a certain number of flights within a three-month period. During tax season the weather was conducive for flying but his workload wasn't, and he worried he might lose his credentials. He thought becoming partner would free up time so he could continue flying.

I turned to the second part of his goal — having more choice in the work



he did — and asked  
what he preferred to do.

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