

# JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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## Ask Sandy: Should You Tell the Boss You Don't Know?

What a conundrum: The boss asks you specifics about a project and you don't know the details. Do you hedge with evasive answers? Admit your ignorance? What should you say?

Like many things in life, it depends. It depends on the boss, the project, and even the organization.

In one organization, the leader was a micromanager with a photographic memory. He expected all of his senior managers to be on top of everything going on in their area. Direct reports would work late into the night to make sure their boss was fully briefed before a morning meeting with the leader. It was not acceptable to bring subject matter experts to the meeting because the leader expected his senior staff to know it all.

Another leader, with a technical background and a very high IQ, enjoyed diving into project details while still keeping a focus on the big picture. When a senior manager couldn't answer her questions, she used it as an opportunity for them both to delve into the situation, learn the issues, and problem solve with the team. In this leader's mind, not knowing the answer to every question was not a weakness; however, pretending to know the answer when you don't is a serious flaw.

In another organization, the leader expected senior managers to be on top of key issues and relevant topics, but she rarely quizzed them on the details. She assumed her people were on top of their



## Mobley's Musings: Decluttering the Mind

We talk a lot about decluttering our homes and offices, but how about decluttering our minds? When there's too much going on and too little time to think or reflect, loss of focus and burn-out are practically inevitable. Then we may find ourselves making little mistakes or even big ones.

I find taking time at the start of the day with a little exercise, meditation, or intentional thinking helps set the stage for a productive day. I ask myself what kind of day do I want? What goals are important to accomplish? How can I structure my day to make sure I have space for thinking and reflecting? With this preparation I am calmer and more focused. I address high-priority issues first and don't get

projects and trusted them to do their jobs correctly. In the few situations where she sought more details, she expected subject matter experts to be brought in to answer in-depth questions.

In most cases, the best course is to admit you don't know an answer and promise to provide the information as soon as possible. Making something up or faking it will only hurt your credibility. Imagine if your boss shares your "made up" information with other leaders. You've put your boss's credibility at risk and possibly your job as well.



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sidelined with less important topics.

To ensure you have that time to yourself you may need to get up earlier, block out that time on your calendar, or find a "hiding place" at work. At one job I'd go in early to gather my thoughts and prepare for the day. Even though I told my staff not to knock on my door until 8:30 am, they'd camp outside my office. Fortunately, my company had a Quiet Room where I could go for privacy. At 8:30, I would come out, go to my office and begin my day, focused and ready for what would come.

**If you have any questions you'd like Sandy to address in future newsletters, email them to:**  
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