

JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

September - 2024



Mobley's Musings: Boundaries Create Comfort

I once thought having boundaries might make me appear rigid or stubborn. But I didn't want to be like some people whose lack of boundaries led them to say yes to a request when they really wanted to say no and ended up resenting it afterwards.

Robert Frost's poem *Mending Wall* asserts that "good fences make good neighbors," and I think that, similarly, good boundaries make good relationships. Strong friendships and relationships that respect boundaries allow us to express our needs with the knowledge that the other person will respect them. If we don't say what we want, it is unfair to expect others to read our minds. One of my coaching teachers said, "Resentment occurs when the other person fails to fulfill a request you dared not make." How many times have you "dared not" ask for something in the hope the other person would know what you want?

Maybe we have lost the ability to know what we want, or we talk ourselves out of it. Small children seem to express their needs easily, but as we get older it is often socialized out of us. To fortify my boundaries, I remember to ask myself, "What is it that I want?" while looking for ways to accommodate others' requests and, of course, respecting their boundaries.



Adapting to Today's Changing Workforce

In recent years, leaders have been challenged to do things differently to meet the needs of a diverse and multi-generational workforce that values flexibility and autonomy in positions where they can make a difference. Just as challenging, the pandemic expanded the notion of where and how work is accomplished. Workers today expect organizations to offer work from home and hybrid options in addition to traditional full-time office work.

Organizations that can accommodate these preferences and values will be rewarded with a workforce that is productive and highly engaged.

In a hybrid workplace, with some staff in the office and others remote, leaders need to make sure all staff feel part of the team no matter where they're located.



Ask Sandy

Why the Why Matters

Most leaders know that their staff will be more effective if they understand what's driving a request, that is, not just the “what” that is wanted but the “why” it's needed as well. For example, if you ask for last year's sales figures, you'll probably get just that and nothing more. But, if you explain why the data is needed and how it will be used, you will likely get better information. Saying that you're looking at last year's sales data to determine profitability on each product line will likely produce different results than saying you're planning to use last year's sales data to predict this year's sales.

Leaders who have worked with a team for some time can come to think staff members intuitively know what's going on in their head so there's no need to explain the why of a request. But listeners can have different levels of understanding. It should not be taken as impertinence if a staff member asks why the request is being made. It's a sign that they want to do their best.

I have seen employees become frustrated after drafting a comprehensive report when the leader only wanted a high-level assessment. Equally frustrating is receiving a high-level report when the leader wanted details and specifics. When making a request I attempt to provide all the background the person might need to complete the task without getting too lost in the weeds. But hard as I try, I still leave things out. I ask people to tell me what they understand about my request — the what and the why. That way I know whether we are all on the same page or if I've left pertinent information out.

Explaining the why of a request not only will produce better results, it also conveys to staff that they have a consultative role on the team and their added value is appreciated.

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

And if they want more people to return to the office at least a few days of the week, they should enhance the value of in-office days by organizing strong collaborative sessions and opportunities for networking. If in-office days amount to sitting at their desks and working by themselves, management and staff will question the value of coming into the office.

To increase the effectiveness of hybrid meetings and ensure all participants contribute, leaders need to dedicate more time to planning, developing and circulating workable agendas ahead of the session. Brushing up on their facilitation skills will also help ensure meetings are productive. Some leaders are finding AI tools can be useful in summarizing the meeting and capturing key actions.

Despite the evolving workforce preferences, some companies are reverting to their old ways. Dell Computers told employees if they chose to work remotely, they should realize they would not be promoted or allowed to change jobs internally. It's rumored Dell's decree is intended to reduce staffing levels without having to pay severance. But the strategy may backfire if the company loses key talent and has trouble recruiting.



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