

JUICY WORK NEWS

Updates from The Learning Advantage

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Mobley's Musings – High Horse or High Road

When someone does something we don't like, we can choose how to react. We can get on our high horse and tell them off with a superior attitude. Or we can take the high road and grant them grace. Which do you choose?

A client has a colleague who routinely takes credit for her work in meetings. It would be within her rights to call the colleague out, but confronting someone publicly for wrongly taking credit can have negative consequences. Because she has a large group of leaders who know what she has done, she lets it slide in the meeting and decides to speak with her colleague one-on-one.

In our personal lives, minor affronts can snowball into major arguments if we allow it. I can't count the number of people on social media haranguing their neighbors for not cleaning up after their dogs. Certainly it's inconsiderate, unsightly, and unhealthy, but is this the battle you want to fight?

So yes, people can irritate us, but how we react is up to us. If you get on your high horse, you risk looking bad or falling off. If you take the high road and respond with tact, you feel good about yourself and others see your goodness.



Can Leaders Make Their People Happy?

In his book *Drive*, Daniel Pink asserts that three elements are essential for you to be happy at work: a purpose you feel strongly about, proficiency with skills you enjoy using, and a degree of autonomy that allows you to function in a way that works for you. There are other factors that can influence workplace happiness, such as colleagues who encourage you, opportunities to share your knowledge, and recognition for a job well done. But for Pink, the absence of those three basic elements limits your ability to be contented over the long term.

Leaders can play a role in nurturing workplace happiness. They can supply purpose: think of Steve Jobs inspiring people to see things differently and change the world. But if the



Ask Sandy

Lift Up, Let Down, or Let Go: A Leader's Dilemma

While getting 360-degree feedback on a client, her manager told me that if my client were watching a relay race and saw one of her team members fall and drop the baton, she would rush in to pick up the baton and finish the race. Her manager said that while her impulse to finish the race was laudable, he felt she should have helped the fallen team member rather than take her place.

This can be a dilemma for leaders: when to step in and when to support the person who is falling. As in most situations, the answer is "it depends." I'd want to know why the person is falling. Is it a lack of ability? Can training help them succeed, or will they never be able to perform at the level required? A team is only as strong as its weakest link, so if someone is consistently pulling the team down, I recommend leaders help the person find a team where their skills provide a lift instead of a drag.

Leaders need to consider several factors to resolve this dilemma. Does the organization have the luxury to wait while people get up to speed or does it require high performers right from the start? If someone always has to step in to replace a failing team member, they may lose confidence and ultimately give up when encouragement and coaching could have helped them get over the hurdles.

If possible, assigning the person other duties can help determine whether the issue is one of self-

leader's vision doesn't align with your values, you'll have to find purpose some other way. And most all leaders want everyone to apply their skills in work they enjoy. After all, it's hard to be happy doing work you aren't good at and don't like doing. But changing business conditions may sometimes require a change in assignments. Similarly, leaders may want to give people the flexibility to arrange their work hours and workspace that suits them best and not be micromanaged in an environment that is so structured that it feels like a straitjacket. But that flexibility may come into conflict with the demands of customers, clients, and partners.

When it comes down to it, there is little a leader can do to make people happy if they are not clear on what gives them purpose, what work they enjoy and are good at, and what environment allows them to do their best work.

Simply put, if you don't know what you need, it is hard to get it. And you can't expect your manager to figure it out for you.

Over my career I tried many vocations, searching for one that would provide meaning and contentment. It required taking risks, asking for what I wanted,

confidence or skillset. A client was reluctant to fire an employee who performed poorly in her role as a technical proofreader but had strong administrative skills. The employee was unhappy knowing she was letting the rest of her team down, so she was thrilled when the client offered her a role on the human resources team. Her old team members were happy for her — and for themselves.

Recalling the manager in that 365-degree feedback interview, I wondered about the effect of criticizing, even if gently, a team member who prioritizes winning the relay race. What performance should leaders incentivize? If high performers are obligated to lift underperformers, they will likely seek a job or role with other high performers, leaving the leader who didn't praise them with a team of people who need lots of help.

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



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getting additional education, and doing a lot of soul searching. The key is to not give up, even when it feels like there is nothing that matches what you want.

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