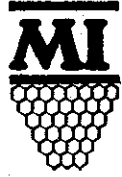


Management Ideas



FOR STILL BETTER

RESULTS

RELATIONS

REPUTATION

a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders
on practices, possibilities and ideas generally
for stepped up performance
edited by
N. H. ATTHREYA MA PhD
author, educator & consultant
on problem-solving and creative ideas

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3249 **THIS WORKED FOR ME:** In some publications, the Readers pose problems and either the Editor or an expert answers them. We give below two samples.

To **Management Ideas** Readers, we have a modified suggestion. You have faced problems and you have sorted them out with success. Each problem, ofcourse, is unique and therefore each solution. Even so, others can get clues and confidence from such sharing.

May we request you to state a problem or two you faced, the approach you took and the outcome you experienced.

Now for the samples we talked about:

THOSE WHO DO (EXACTLY) AS THEY'RE TOLD. I am a marketing manager at a consumer-products company. I have a problem with my assistant. She is smart and she is good at following instructions--but that's just it: She is too good at following instructions. She takes little initiative and doesn't think things through for herself.

Here is an example. Last week I asked her to book a conference hall at a particular hotel for an upcoming meeting. A couple of hours later she reported to me that the room was not available. Period--end of story.

What she should have done, of course, was call some hotels of a similar size, find out what was available and then bring me her findings. Instead, I have to guide her through the process, step by detailed step.

This happens again and again. Just once I'd like her to take some initiative. Am I expecting too much of her?

Not at all--but you also don't indicate what you are doing to bring your assistant up to speed.

Have you ever spelled out your expectations? Don't say, "Oh, she knows them." The question is, have you spelled them out? Do you take each irritating incident, like the one you described, and turn it into a lesson in which you reinforce what you expect by working through, in detail, what she should have done?

For almost every employee who doesn't meet his or her supervisor's expectations, there is a boss who has never taken the trouble to think through what those expectations are and then communicate them to the employee.

The most difficult interpersonal relationship to handle on the job is, of course, the one with your boss. You expect something more of the boss than of the average employee. You expect him or her to be selfpossessed, decent, considerate. Yet the boss is really just an employee who happened to be in the right place at the right time and therefore got promoted. That promotion did not make him or her more considerate or more empathetic.

AN EMPLOYEE OUT TO GET YOU. Seven months ago, when I took my current job, I inherited a staff of five. One of the five, I recently learned, had applied for my position while it was open. Apparently, she was told she needed more experience.

Now she seems to be out to prove that she should have gotten the job. She is constantly grabbing credit for projects she didn't really do. For instance, she recently sent a memo to our CEO informing him of the department's success on a particular project. The fact is, while she did work on this project, it was I who spearheaded it.

She is perfectly pleasant to me whenever we come in contact with each other, but she says terrible things behind my back. (Last week I overheard her bad-mouthing me to one of my peers in another department.) I kept thinking she would mellow out over time and that coming down hard on her would only make her more bitter. Now I know I have to do something. But what?

Examine the nature of your concerns. Are your employee's shenanigans harmful to your group's work, or are you concerned that she will eventually undermine you? If you are worried about the latter, relax. Moves like the ones you describe are very transparent and are likely to hurt your employee, not you.

Nevertheless, when an employee engages in activities that are designed to downgrade his or her supervisor, everyone around probably feels uncomfortable. For this reason alone, such activities should be

discouraged. The best way is to bring them out in the open. Whenever your staffer acts in an inappropriate manner, call her on it right then and there.

Tell her, for instance, that her letter to the CEO was wrong because it implied that she had more to do with the project than she actually did. If you hear of her badmouthing you, ask her if she has any critical observations to offer about you, and tell her that it would be far more constructive if she offered them to you instead of to others.

Keep this up for a while. If the incidents continue, you may need to raise the stakes by pointing out the destructive effect that the accumulation of such actions has on your group. Stress that you cannot afford to let anything hinder the department's productivity.

3250 HOW TO SAVE YOUR KIDS FROM TV: Heavy TV viewing by children has been tied to greater aggressiveness and restlessness...difficulties in imaginative thinking...problems in acquiring basic reading and writing skills...and poor understanding of world events.

Parents who want their children to reflect the family's values, rather than those of the TV industry, must play an active role in filtering what their children watch.

According to Dr. Jerome L. Singer (co-author of The Parent's Guide; Use TV to Your Child's Advantage), these are few of the things the parents can do:

- * **Limit the number of hours your children spend watching TV.** Ninety minutes a day is a good cutoff.
- * **Know what your children are watching.** Make sure the programs are appropriate.
- * **Have your children finish their homework before they turn on the TV.** It's very hard to concentrate on schoolwork after the strong visual stimulation of TV.
- * **Explain that TV is a commercial medium.** Remind your children that TV is a business that makes money by selling commercial time...that commercials are sales tools, not an extension of the program...that the programmer's goal is to keep the audience watching, not to enlighten or inform...that even the news is edited for visual interest--disasters get disproportionate play.
- * **Watch TV with your kids.** During commercials or at the end of the show, ask your children questions to find out what they think about what they've been watching. Correct any misunderstandings or misinterpretations.
- * **Eat dinner together...with the TV off.** Mealtime is an important opportunity to create an atmosphere in which the family--not the TV--is the center of attention.

3251 DO YOU KNOW THAT: Parking illegally in Japan costs \$1400? The fine was recently increased (from \$200) in an effort to minimize traffic jams?

Leaky water pipes can cause fires - if that leaking water hits connection box or an electric panel?

3252 INTERDEPARTMENTAL TIFFS: HOW ONE COMPANY SAVES ITSELF:

MOST MANAGERS ARE ALL TOO familiar with the strain of interoffice rivalries--whether between departments or individuals. Ad agencies, for example, are notorious for departmental feuding. The "creatives" call the account people "suits". Of course, they really do wear suits. Some of them wear brown suits. Some of them--face it--are nerds. As for the creatives, well, anyone who dresses like that and can't go anywhere without her favorite pencil has to be weired, right?

May be, but the upshot of such battling is lower productivity for the company as a whole. Fortunately, there are ways to bridge staff differences. Ketchum Advertising in New York, along with other corporations across the country, has turned to get-em out-of-the-office adventures. Ketchum sent a group of suits and creatives into the woods for an **Outward Bound** day. With everyone in T-shirts and sweatpants, superficial divisions disappeared: From there, harmony grew out of the humbling challenges the group faced. The first puzzle, in which employees attempted to squeeze through the spaces of a giant spiderweb made of rope, tripped them up immediately.

"There was confusion, yelling and a total lack of planning," one participant recalls. "We failed, but that's when the program began to succeed." Thrown together to solve thorny problems, they learned that ideas and solutions come from all corners--from uptight suits and from flaky creatives.

Another part of Ketchum's team-building scheme is **job switching**. Once a month someone from account services trades places with someone from creative for a day or two. Teddy Borsen, a vice president and art director--and a hard-core creative--spent a day in account services and was assigned to write up a production schedule for a television ad. Aha! This was one schedule that was going to go out with ample time for creative development and production. "I realized that if one side knew what the other was doing," says Borsen, "we could have a perfect world."

A third and increasingly popular tactic companies are using to cool office rivalries is to bring in a **corporate consultant**.

To assess the cause of a dispute, psychologists interview, observe and meet with managers and executives. They counsel individuals and may even run personality tests. They look for conflicts between individuals that may be affecting the whole department and watch how managers manage. Are bosses feuding and their staffs taking sides? Do bosses pit departments against one another? Do managers give adequate direction and recognition?

Effective conflict-resolving strategies like these have been suggested:

Make sure everyone is aiming for the same target. Individual and departmental goals have to jibe with corporate objectives, which must

come from on high, loud and clear, through memos, meetings and corporate publications. If, for instance, one person values catering to a few high-rolling customers and another to the hordes, conflict is inevitable.

Help those who inflame personality conflicts see how they are perceived. Few are really the incorrigible pills they seem to be. More likely, they are simply misunderstood. For example, the intimidating, enigmatic department head may actually be shy. Schiffer advises people to stand back and take an objective look at how they come across to others. "If people don't understand you," she says, "they don't trust you."

3253 STAGE FRIGHT: WHETHER YOU ARE REPRESENTING YOUR company at a conference or making a presentation to senior management, public speaking can definitely boost your career. However, if the mere thought of speaking in front of a group makes you tremble, sweat and stammer, don't panic--help is near.

Washington State University (WSU) researchers asked three groups of speechshy subjects to try different antidotes: relaxation, rational thinking and "visualization," which involves imagining yourself, in vivid detail, making a fabulously successful presentation. The results: The visualization group felt significantly less speech fright than the other groups and, eight months later, still felt calmer and more confident.

Visualization works so well because it makes you comfortable with the event before it happens. The level of detail makes the presentation seem real, and the anxiety of the unknown becomes less strong, says Joe Ayres, professor of communication at WSU at Pullman. To "see" yourself succeed, try these steps:

- * Begin with a few minutes of deep breathing, eyes closed, until you feel relaxed.
- * Eyes still closed, begin to visualize the entire day of your speech. See yourself putting on the perfect suit. Feel your energy and confidence. Imagine your colleagues eagerly awaiting your talk.
- * Next, envision yourself actually giving the talk. Notice how polished and knowledgeable you sound. Imagine the audience nodding and smiling. Visualize yourself fielding questions with confidence. Finally, imagine receiving enthusiastic congratulations from your audience.
- * Practice this 10 to 15 minute exercise several times during the week of your presentation, including the day of the big speech.

3254 LAUGHING MATTER?

The wife of a lawyer was complaining that her husband often refused to accompany her to parties because so many people spoiled his evening by asking him for advice. One evening while attending a party, the woman spoke with a doctor and asked him if he experienced the same problem.

"All the time," replied the doctor. "Then how do you get rid of these people?" asked the woman.

"I have a wonderful remedy," the doctor grinned. "When someone begins telling me his ailments, I stop him with one word, 'Undress!'"

COMPLAIN NOT
ABOUT DARKNESS.
LIGHT A CANDLE

Hopeful & Helpful

*Positively Exciting
Personally Useful*

Good News From Anywhere

Inspiring multiplier models and exemplary acts of excellence are found all over the country. They are hardly written up.

Many miss the point that the positively exciting is also news.

Also, adequate efforts are not made to bring useful information to the literate public.

There is a case for collecting and spreading hopeful and helpful information and news.

May I invite our Readers to join me in this quest and share their discoveries and findings through these columns?

NH ATTREYA Editor

A TRUST VILLAGE: There are no front doors in Shingnapur, a village (population 2000) 30 Km east of Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. No burglary has been reported for over 100 years. Or any crimes.

The villagers don't believe in locking up valuables in trunks. None of the houses have front doors. "And no police station in sight."

(Source: Sunday: 7-13- July, 1991.)

ANOTHER FULLY LITERATE DISTRICT: We referred to one in July 1991. Burdwan in West Bengal is the second. More than 90% of the district's 48,35,000 odd (multi lingual) population can read, write and make simple calculations. Certainly not a mean achievement, considering that the literacy rate was a mere 42.43% last year.

Credit goes to Mchboob Zahadi, the Sashadipati of the Zilla Parished and Rajiv Sinha, the additional district magistrate.

(Source: Sunday: 7-13 July, 1991)