

Communication

Bulletin TM for Managers & Supervisors

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

October 16, 2020



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Management Skills Center

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5 career-sinking habits: Don't let them sabotage your success

The good news: Nearly everyone can overcome ingrained habits

As hard as you work at being a good boss and ideal employee, could you be undermining those efforts with bad habits?

Researchers give an adamant, "Yes!"

The worst part: You might not even recognize bad leadership and communication habits that derail teams and jeopardize careers because they're ingrained.

The better part: "Emotionally intelligent leaders know what triggers their (damaging habits) and learn how to control their responses," says Kerry Goyette, author of *The Non-Obvious Guide to Emotional Intelligence*. "Strategic ones also design their environments and teams to keep themselves – and everyone else – on track."

Goyette and other researchers found these five habits most detrimental to team success and effective communication. We include tips on overcoming them.

Conflict avoidance

When it worked: You were a child and wanted to avoid issues with siblings or parents.

Why it doesn't now: Work, team and communication problems don't go away. They usually get worse when avoided.

Where it exists: Putting off difficult conversations, making excuses for issues, turning a blind eye to employees' conflicts, moving ahead after a fail without uncovering

Please see Habits ... on Page 2.

Sharpen Your Judgment

Did restructuring exclude older employees?

"Morning, Ralph. Do you have a sec?" asked Supervisor Beverly Wills.

"For you Bev, always," said CEO Ralph Sheets.

"I wanted to warn you," said Beverly. "Marty Brown just called me. He's suing us for age discrimination."

"You've got to be kidding me," said Ralph.

"Wish I was," said Beverly.

Better qualified for position

"He was let go because his department merged with another one," said Ralph. "We didn't need two managers."

"We wrote up a very detailed comparison

of the two of them, including their experience, performance reviews, ages, genders and a bunch of other stuff," continued Ralph. "The other manager had more industry experience, consistently made higher numbers and had glowing reviews. That's why we picked her."

"I know," said Beverly. "The manager from the other department was way more qualified."

"I've been collaborating with her for a month now on a project, and she's much more efficient than Marty was, and he was a friend of mine," added Beverly.

Marty filed his suit under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), and the company fought to get the case dismissed.

Did Ralph's company win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.

The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The *Bulletin* helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

Habits ...

(continued from Page 1)

and resolving underlying issues, etc.

Overcome it: Recognize conflict avoidance as a fear of the unknown, rejection, pushback, etc. Then write your plans to fix the conflict, share it with a trusted colleague to pan out specifics and execute the best plan.

Blame-shifting

When it worked: high school when you and friends were up to no good – and got caught!

Why it doesn't work now: It kills credibility and incites team revolt.

Where it exists: Blame-shifters exaggerate negatives, pass the buck to colleagues, claim wins while denying losses and play the victim.

Overcome it: Avoid blame-shifting attitudes, such as “I did all I could,” or “I don't have the right power, so I can't be blamed.” Move beyond them to problem-solving mode.

Perfectionism

When it worked: early career when you wanted to be noticed to get ahead.

Why it doesn't work now: You can't control all people and work.

Where it exists: Missed deadlines and

opportunities occur because the work never seems good enough, resulting in losses and team disappointments.

Overcome it: Confirm standards with respected colleagues, bosses and employees. Ask for feedback on expected results and time lines.

Impulsiveness

When it worked: early career when less was at stake.

Why it doesn't work now: You're responsible for a team's success. This burns bridges and hurts relationships.

Where it exists: Impulsive people have unpredictable emotional reactions – chasing the new shiny deal, explosive anger, bragging incessantly about wins.

Overcome it: Before projects, anticipate outcomes and how you'll need to respond to the potential stumbles, successes and fails.

Controlling

When it worked: early career when you needed to prove leadership skills.

Why it doesn't work now: You undermine employees' worth and lose their engagement.

Where it exists: You closely oversee or take on others' responsibilities.

Overcome it: Purposely space out check-ins. Get input on expectations, goals and how they're accomplished.

Source: HBR, tinyurl.com/habits486

TECH CORNER

Friendly little reminder of some computer tricks

The pandemic has caused chaos in everyone's life at some point. So, little reminders are helpful, especially if they'll save you some time.

After all, there's only so much you can remember when you're working remotely, helping your kids with school and juggling life during a pandemic.

Time-saving shortcuts

Here are some computer tricks you may have known, but have gotten lost in the recesses of your mind:

- **Undo:** Type *Ctrl Z* to undo an action

you just took on your computer. Delete a paragraph or move a file? No problem. *Ctrl Z* will revert to your previous action.

- **Redo:** Type *Ctrl Y*, and you can redo whatever you undid.
- **Sub- and superscript:** Holding down *Ctrl* and the = keys will give you subscript text. *Ctrl Shift +* gives you superscript.
- **Reduce everything:** Want to reduce all your open screens at once? Hold down the *Window* and *D* keys.
- **Close a window.** Only want to close your current window? Press *Ctrl* and the *W* keys.

Info: tinyurl.com/compshortcuts486

COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

How to get people to share more best practices

If employees shared their practices, everyone could be more productive.

So, why don't they? For one, many employees don't realize the hack or efficiency they use is something that could benefit the team.

Here's how to spread the best-practice love:

- **Create a best-practice practice.** Ask employees who are good at particular tasks how they do it. Encourage employees to note the things they successfully do differently. Pass the ideas along in training and/or messages.
- **Schedule it.** Make best-practice sharing a part of your agenda. Add it to a monthly meeting, regular Slack discussion, weekly email roundup, etc. Have employees take turns sharing important ideas.

Source: Idea Champions, tinyurl.com/practices485

3 things the best virtual meeting presenters do

As a leader, you're newest role is probably virtual meeting organizer, presenter and facilitator.

So, you want to get every meeting right. Leadership and engagement expert Rick Goodman found these are the top three traits of good virtual presenters:

- **Understand technology.** The best presenters don't wing it at all. They learn more about the virtual technology they must use – Zoom, Microsoft Meetings, Slack, etc. – before they facilitate meetings. They know how to share screens, use polls and add Q&A.
- **Share relevant and interesting content.** Don't just talk and share PowerPoint slides. Encourage participation with prompted conversations and interactive material.
- **Manage time.** Limit meeting time to 30 minutes or incorporate breaks. Add activities to increase interaction.

Source: Business2Community, tinyurl.com/presenter486

Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

1 Starting every meeting off on the right foot

Not only do most people dislike meetings, but at our company, it was starting to feel like meetings were only for delivering bad news.

We needed a fresh strategy, but how could we stop people from hating meetings?

Small but powerful change

It came down to a simple tweak.

We decided to change how the meetings started.

Now, at every meeting, all attendees share something good that's happened to them recently.

It can be anything from a recent win at work to fun personal news.

And it's been a huge success!

We've all enjoyed learning more about each other, and we now know what's going on personally and professionally in each other's lives. It's built stronger connections between colleagues.

Bonus: It's done wonders for what comes after in the meeting. Since we begin on a lighter note, even when we have some not-so-positive things to discuss, everyone handles them better.

(Lisa Tanzer, President, Life is Good, Boston)

2 Smooth transition to new software

We noticed our software could use an update for some new processes we put in place during the pandemic.

We thought it was the perfect time to upgrade to help employees adapt to the change as quickly as possible.

However, we knew diving into a new system without extra training could be anxiety-inducing for some. So, we created a sample version of the program people could practice using.

Practice makes perfect

We even uploaded part of our database so staff could try out the software using familiar information.

All the steps were the same, as if the software were live, but there wasn't a way to mess up data.

Now that people have been practicing, we're confident that when we go live with our new system, everyone will be comfortable with the transition. It's given our staff peace of mind to be able to practice, and they're feeling like they're ready to tackle the change.

(Paula York, Accounting Manager, Weamco Inc., Sapulpa, OK)

3 Best question for the end of all interviews

When I hired employees, I wanted the right people for our organization. This benefitted both sides – new employees were happy, and we became a better place because of it.

But some hires didn't work out. When it happened, I wondered if we'd discussed concerns or hesitations before I hired them, maybe both sides would've seen it wasn't a good fit.

That's why I added a last interview question to help with good-fit hiring.

Helps me see different issues

Now I ask, "What is one thing you heard here today or understand about this job that gives you pause?"

Few jobs are perfect, and this question gives them permission to express concerns. If it's a candidate I want to hire, it gives me chance to address concerns. If it's not an ideal fit, I can learn something about the company or role that I didn't see as an issue. It's been a great tool for hires at every level.

(Mark Lubragge, Co-Founder, Spire Broadcast Talent and 3,2,1 Impact, Philadelphia)



YOUR LEGAL COACH

Can I stop employees from making TikTok videos?

Question: Our employees are back and we've seen a few make TikTok videos on-site. Can we stop them?

Answer: Probably, says Daniel Schwartz, an employment law attorney with Shipman & Goodwin LLP.

More than 50 million videos tagged with "workplace" have been posted. That doesn't mean you can't control whether they're produced at your workplace.

Most are harmless. Many are fun. But they're still on social media – and if they're associated with your workplace and/or employees at work, they fall under your social media guidelines.

If you have guidelines, make sure they include TikTok. If you don't have employee guidelines for what's appropriate or acceptable in social media use in and out of work, it's time to create a policy and educate employees on it and the consequences of not adhering to it, Schwartz says.

Sources: tinyurl.com/fired486 and tinyurl.com/tiktok486

LIGHTER SIDE

Do we have the most fitting job titles?

CEO, CFO, manager, VP, clerk, staff accountant, customer service rep – they all seem like accurate titles for the position, right?

Another outlook

Sure ... until you consider these ideas. Should:

- a librarian be called a bookkeeper?
- a referee be called a game warden?
- a dairy farmer be called a cowboy?
- a cabinetmaker be called the president or governor?
- a CFO be called a billkeeper?
- a geologist be called a rockstar?
- an astronomer be called a stargazer?

Source: RD.com

COMMUNICATION NEWS

Effective leaders hold these 4 beliefs

There's a big difference between being a manager and a leader. Giving orders and making sure they're followed with no regard for morale isn't being a leader.

And in difficult times, people need leaders.

Leadership beliefs

Luckily, you can learn to be a leader. But to be effective, you must accept certain things:

1. **Your ideas aren't always the best.** Other people have great ideas, too. Effective leaders are open and supportive of other team members' ideas and aren't afraid to admit they're wrong.

2. **Not everything is about you.** If your team is voicing concerns, don't take it personally. It's a good thing. Conflict spurs creativity. If you have a team that agrees with you 100% of the time, then you aren't leading them.
3. **It's not just your team that needs training.** Effective leaders read all they can, take classes, go to seminars and invest in their own professional development.
4. **You need strong, intelligent people.** Effective leaders can't be experts in everything. They surround themselves with people who have strengths where they are weak.

Source: tinyurl.com/leadership486

3 weird things that happen – and should be fixed – on Zoom

More than 200 million people have participated in Zoom events – and the bulk of those were business meetings.

Unfortunately, weird things happen in virtual meetings, but you can prevent them.

3 things lost

Here are three oddities and how to work around them, says Boise State Technology Educator Norm Friesen. You lose:

- **Eye contact.** Look at the camera and you appear to be staring. Look at the speaker

and it appears you're focused on something else. Mix up where you look for a balance.

- **Anonymity.** People feel like they're being watched and critiqued by others in the meeting. In reality, most people watch – and worry about – their own appearance more than yours. So, stop worrying!
- **Sound.** Voices often break up or get hijacked by background noises. Regularly ask for clarification and repetition.

Source: tinyurl.com/videoblunders486
tinyurl.com/dailyvideo486

Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes. The company won when a court said it didn't discriminate against the employee under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA).

The employee's attorney said that because the two managers' ages were included in the comparison process, the company demonstrated age bias. The company only compared experience and performance to cover up its real motive: age discrimination, the attorney said.

But the court disagreed. Merely including an employee's age, even for comparison, doesn't establish age bias. The court further explained the firm provided enough "business-related" reasons for termination. The comparison document supported the claim the other employee had more extensive experience

and higher performance ratings. Therefore, the firm didn't show age discrimination.

Document qualifications for job

It's vital for companies to keep accurate records, especially during layoffs.

Processes like restructuring that entail layoffs or shifts in job responsibilities are a breeding ground for these types of claims. To prevent them, employers must document precise eligibility factors and allow laid-off employees 45 days to review a severance agreement.

(Based on *Zabala-De Jesus, et al v. Sanofi-Aventis Puerto Rico Inc.* Dramatized for effect.)

Quotes

Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.

– William James

Try to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud.

– Maya Angelou

The key to life is resilience. We will always be knocked down. It's the getting up that counts.

– Dominique Browning

Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success.

– Albert Schweitzer

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