

Communication

Bulletin TM for Managers & Supervisors

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

November 16, 2020



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5 tough questions managers want to ask but don't – plus the answers

Many questions revolve around praise and morale

You know those tough questions that bubble up inside you about leadership from time to time?

They're the kind you want to ask but don't for fear they're insensitive, complaint-like or naive.

Liz Uram, trainer, speaker and author of four books, including *Communicate Like a Boss: Every Day Leadership Skills That Produce Real Results*, boldly puts the questions – and their answers – out there.

Most are centered around employee praise and communication. After all, everyone knows it's important to communicate enough and give praise, but it can be awkward for many leaders.

“One of the most important communication skills in a leader's skill kit is the ability to give

positive feedback. This is also one of the most underdeveloped skills for many leaders,” Uram says. “The reason is that some leaders just don't know where to start.”

Here's where.

‘Why should I praise people for just doing their jobs?’

To some, this question sounds insensitive.

But to leaders who always did their job without expecting balloons and banners, it's real and simple. And the answer is simple:

“Two words: positive reinforcement,” Uram says. “What gets rewarded gets repeated. If you

Please see Questions ... on Page 2.

Sharpen Your Judgment

Hostile environment? Worker followed, stared at

“Morning, Catherine,” said Anthony Barns, the company attorney. “Got a minute?”

“Sure,” said Catherine Grant, HR manager, as she got up from her desk. “I was just going to get more coffee. Walk with me.”

Catherine and Anthony headed for the break room. “I wanted to talk to you about Becca Graves,” Anthony said, face grim. “She's suing us for a hostile work environment.”

Addressed the harassment

“What?” said Catherine, stopping in her tracks. “You can't be serious!”

Anthony frowned. “I know she had issues with Ralph, but I didn't think it would escalate to this.”

“Becca complained to me about Ralph,” Catherine explained. “Apparently, he would stare at her constantly and follow her around during her shift. It made her very uncomfortable.”

“Did you talk to Ralph?” Anthony asked.

“Of course I did,” Catherine replied. “I told him the behavior was unacceptable and he needed to stop. But Becca said he still did it.”

“I feel for her, but I hardly think staring is enough to establish a hostile work environment,” added Catherine.

“We'll fight this,” said Anthony.

When Becca sued for a hostile work environment, the company fought to get the case dismissed. Did it 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.

Questions ...

(continued from Page 1)

want them to keep doing their job, let them know that their work is appreciated.”

‘We pay well. Shouldn’t the money be enough motivation?’

In a word, no. Some may get enough out of the paycheck. Others don’t. And it’s the leader’s job to motivate as necessary.

“The best leaders understand that everyone is different and they meet people ... without judgment,” Uram says.

Check if their motivation is cash, recognition, challenging work, growth opportunities, job security, etc.

‘How can I possibly praise them without sounding phony?’

Leaders who don’t fully understand why they need to praise people for hitting expectations might sound insincere. But you won’t if the praise is:

Specific: Skip “Good job,” and say exactly what happened and why it’s important. Example: “Thanks for jumping in to help with that order. The extra effort for the team will help us reach the monthly goal even sooner.”

Timely: Praise immediately.

Sincere: If you get the first two right, you’ll be sincere.

‘I don’t need to cause resentment. Can’t I just send an email?’

Sometimes, yes, you actually can because “you should give your praise where the employee is most comfortable,” Uram says.

But don’t shy away from public praise because you’re afraid it’ll make other employees jealous.

“Looking for opportunities to give shout-outs for positive behaviors, both big and small, in public creates a culture of appreciation,” Uram says.

‘I gave a good performance review. Isn’t that enough for this year?’

Not quite, but “praising too often can be as bad as not praising often enough. Running around giving high-fives, thumbs up, and generic ‘thanks’ is exhausting for you and uninspiring to your team,” Uram says.

A good rule: Praise each employee once a week. And don’t say to yourself, “but some people don’t do praise-worthy work for weeks.”

Look harder for positive behavior. Thank people for showing up, getting work done, sharing, being on time to meetings, smashing a goal, etc.

Source: lizuram.com

TECH CORNER

Practice makes perfect in cybersecurity effort

Cybercriminals are more active than ever since people are focused on the election.

To help protect your company from data breaches, create a cybersecurity culture. It might sound like a lot, but it’s easy to do if you follow these steps:

- **Institutional memory.** Create a document that includes policies, procedures, guidelines, incident response plans, asset inventories, etc. By writing everything down in one place, it’s accessible to all staff.
- **Technology,** like firewalls, needs

backups. Your team should also ensure the physical security of devices used at your firm. No device should go unprotected.

- **People.** Train employees in best practices, have them attend cybersecurity training and make all staff aware of your strategy.
- **Practice.** Tests and practice will help staff learn without the pressures of real threats in the way. Show them samples of phishing emails, phone scams and other ways criminals might try to get your data. All these steps will help keep your company safe from cybercriminals.

Source: tinyurl.com/security488

COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

■ 4 mistakes every new leader needs to avoid

With all the coronavirus shakeups, many people are in new or different leadership positions now.

Lolly Daskal, author of *The Leadership Gap*, says new leaders need to avoid these mistakes:

- **Power trips.** Don’t show what you can do. Show you care by collaborating and sharing successes.
- **Hiding behind the door.** Walk around and get to know people, so you understand what needs to change and what needs to stay.
- **Shooting from the hip.** Practice emotional intelligence to identify emotions (yours and employees’), understand the emotions and act reasonably on them.
- **Managing down.** You want to keep your leadership visible from all directions. Help employees, and work with bosses and colleagues.

Source: tinyurl.com/newleader486

■ Managers: Be kind to yourself, too

Would you call employees dumb, lazy or irresponsible to their faces?

Of course not! So why do many managers use those – or similar – words in their minds when they make mistakes or fail?

Unfortunately, leaders adopt the same negative self-talk they discourage in employees – and you want to stop it. So, next time you give yourself a hard time, think if it’s something you’d say to an employee. If not, figure out what you’d say to an employee who tripped up and give yourself the same respect.

Source: tinyurl.com/selftalk488

■ Want to meet? Try a park

Need interaction – or just crave it – with your remote team? Try a park meeting. Managers have recently turned park open spaces into bring-your-own-lawnchair meeting spaces. Do it as long as the weather allows.

Source: tinyurl.com/parks488

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 Probing questions keep devil's advocates at bay

Most companies have at least one person who sees the negative side of everything.

They may see themselves as simply playing the devil's advocate, but their constant negativity keeps everyone from getting things done.

No matter who they are, it's important to stop them from damaging morale.

Add something constructive

We've found a tactic that can smother negativity in any situation. We ask questions that refocus negative employees' thoughts toward something

constructive. For example:

- If they claim something is too pricey, we ask, "How much is too much?"
- If they say something is a terrible idea, we ask, "What part of it are you most concerned about?"
- If they say that won't work, we ask, "What didn't work before and why do you think it'll happen again?"

These questions get them to think about real solutions, or remain silent unless they have something constructive to add.

(Pamela Jett, CEO, Jett Communications, Mesa, AZ)

2 Contact's critical for remote workforce

After the pandemic hit, we had to make a fast pivot to an almost exclusive remote workforce.

We found communication critical. Managers needed to stay in contact with employees regularly. We created one central location for info and gave managers tools to support employees.

Everything would come to managers from employees and go through them from leadership. We also gave managers time to ask employees: What's difficult? What's on your mind? What are you hearing around you?

Feedback's key

We give people all the context they need. We don't just pass info and edicts along to employees. We help them understand what goes into them. Most importantly, a lot of that context comes from employee feedback through surveys and real-time updates.

Like many companies, we decided to move toward a total remote work model. It's an equalizer. No one is at a disadvantage.

(Karen O'Neill, Director of People Growth, Facebook, Menlo Park, CA)

3 'Position Review' helps us thrive

For the most part, we hired employees who fit into our company and their particular role.

But over time we'd find they did well in some aspects of their role, struggled in other areas and excelled in other parts.

That proved that we'd made good hires – and the employees were happy with their choice to come to us.

But we wanted to make sure everyone was in the role that suited him or her best.

Invitation to change

We started a quarterly position review with leaders. They'd look at their employees and make sure each was in a role he or she loved and was growing in. They also kept an eye on needs in other areas and if any of their employees would be an ideal fit for the need. If we saw a good fit, we'd invite employees to take on a new role.

It's helped us maximize employee productivity, morale and effectiveness.

(Howard Spector, CEO, SimplePractice, Santa Monica, CA)



YOUR LEGAL COACH

Remote onboarding: What must we cover?

Question: We've hired, and new employees will start remotely. It'll be a different first day. Anything we must still make sure happens?

Answer: Some things remain the same, others don't, says attorney Max Muller, Principal at Max Muller & Associates.

You still need to give them a written document about your onboarding and telework policy. They need to acknowledge they've seen and agreed to it, Muller says.

You can go over the documents remotely – perhaps in a Zoom call – and have employees sign and send them via mail, email, etc. The government waived a requirement that one form – the I-9 – be signed in person. You'll still want to get together within three days of return to the worksite to do it formally, Muller advises.

Source: Muller spoke at the HRMorning Masterclass with Facebook HR, HRMorning.com

LIGHTER SIDE

A 'sign' for the time

Companies build mottos to reflect their vision. Some mottos – like these – also reflect some personality:

- At a podiatrist's office: "Time wounds all heels."
- At a tire shop: "Invite us to your next blowout."
- On an electrician's truck: "Let us remove your shorts."
- On a taxidermist's window: "We really know our stuff."
- At an optometrist's office: "If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place."
- In a veterinarian's waiting room: "Be back in five minutes. Sit! Stay!"
- Outside a restaurant: "Don't stand there and be hungry. Come on in and get fed up."
- Outside a funeral home: "Drive carefully. We'll wait."

COMMUNICATION NEWS

Getting pushback? Look at your approach

When employees push back on company policies, just repeating the policy won't get them to buy in.

You need to understand why they feel this way and how to adjust your approach to reach them.

Listen first

Employees bring unique perspectives to the workplace. Typically that's a positive, but it can also lead to friction when a strong opinion conflicts with a policy.

The Behavioral Change Stairway Model, developed by the FBI for crisis negotiation, is one framework to help people understand and embrace policies. It's made up of five

components: active listening, empathy, rapport, influence and enabling behavioral change.

Start by creating space to listen to and truly understand peoples' reasons for objecting to a policy (active listening). The goal is to identify the values underlying the disagreement (empathy).

Then explore how your policies align with those values (rapport). Show how the policy benefits them and the company. This allows you to guide and change behavior (influence).

If you show you value their opinions as you evolve your new program, they feel like they're part of the process (enabling behavioral change).

Source: tinyurl.com/pushback488

New research proves it doesn't pay to be a jerk

Forget the "nice guys finish last" mentality. It's not true. Workplace jerks are losers.

Turns out, people who are nice, sociable and dominant get ahead just fine throughout their careers, says research published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Their jerk counterparts, who use hostility, deception and manipulation to get ahead, don't become more powerful.

The problem is, people remember jerks – and confuse their dominant attitudes with

actual power – and take direction from people who shouldn't give it.

They come on 2 fronts

Leaders, beware of jerks' on two fronts:

- **Colleagues.** Consider if he or she has power over you or your employees before you give in to his or her demands.
- **Employees.** When you assign or promote, consider skills and aptitude. Disregard entitled attitudes.

Source: tinyurl.com/research487

Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

No, the company lost. A district court dismissed the case, but the 9th Circuit reversed this decision.

The company argued that Ralph's conduct wasn't severe and pervasive enough to constitute a hostile work environment. It also claimed the company acted appropriately by telling Ralph his conduct was unacceptable.

But the 9th Circuit disagreed. It said Ralph's harassment was more than offhand comments and it could be considered severe and pervasive.

The 9th Circuit also pointed out the company's response wasn't "effective." It said the company counseled Ralph about his actions,

but it was unclear whether it expressed "strong disapproval."

Once and done isn't enough

This case shows that not only is it important to take every sexual harassment complaint seriously, but it's also important to respond appropriately. While the company addressed the issue with the accused harasser, it didn't stop the behavior. The harassment continued.

All harassment complaints should be taken seriously and handled swiftly.

(Based on *Simmons v. Safeway Inc. U.S. Ct. of App. 9th Circ.* Dramatized for effect.)

Quotes

Don't settle for style. Succeed in substance.

– Wynton Marsalis

Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.

– Ruth Bader Ginsburg

I didn't lose the gold. I won the silver.

– Michelle Kwan

You can't do it unless you can imagine it.

– George Lucas

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