

Communication

Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors™

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

July 1, 2021



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Management Skills Center

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Hundreds of tips to get writing right

5 difficult personalities – and how to effectively work with each

Be prepared whether it's an employee, colleague or boss

Some people can make your day more difficult than you expected.

Whether it's an employee, colleague or your boss, a difficult person – or someone with a very different approach to work – can stop you in your tracks. Or they might just slow your progress. Some might manage to bring the team to its knees.

What can you do?

“You can't change the difficult person, but you can change how you deal with them,” says Paul Thornton, author of *Leadership: Perfecting Your Approach and Style*.

“Effective communication is always important, but even more important when dealing with difficult people.”

To work with difficult people, you want to know the types and how to communicate effectively with each. Thornton offers guidance:

Agressors

Who they are: They tend to dominate conversations and control situations – or at least try to do both. They're often know-it-alls and, at the same time, close-minded.

How to deal: Here are a few strategies for dealing with Agressors when they act up:

- Call them out. For instance, “You're yelling. Do you mean to do that?”
- Meet them where they are physically. If

Please see Difficult ... on Page 2.

Sharpen Your Judgment

Is mentor a help or harasser?

“This is completely wrong,” veteran staffer Judy Dominick said, circling a typed paragraph in red ink. “You need to write reports to our specifications, not to whatever you feel like doing.”

New employee Brandi Loftus sat wide eyed across the conference room table. “I didn't realize. I can give it another try.”

“You have to. And you need to try a lot harder,” Judy said. “In all the years I've mentored new employees, I've never seen such an awful report. It's like you didn't pay attention in training.”

“Well I did,” Brandi said, growing defensive. “And in all the jobs I've had, I've never worked with a woman as rude as you are to other women.”

“If you think this is rude, you're in for a rude

awakening,” Judy said. “Get to work on this.”

That was enough for Judy, though. She did the minimum in her role as mentor, correcting Brandi's mistakes with the same high level of criticism. Judy avoided contact with Brandi otherwise.

Files complaint

“She's a bully,” Brandi told the HR manager a few months later. “I don't want to work with or around her. She makes me miserable.”

HR assigned another mentor, but Brandi didn't stick around much longer. Instead, she quit and sued, claiming the former mentor harassed and humiliated her based on gender.

The company fought the case. 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.

Difficult ...

(continued from Page 1)

they're standing, stand up. Look them in the eye.

Victims

Who they are: They complain, whine and blame others for what bothers them. They're pessimists and love a self-absorbed pity party.

How to deal: A few tactics for dealing with Victims:

- Call them out – and put a number on it. For instance, “Do you realize you’ve complained about four separate things in the last minute?”
- Change the focus to solutions now, issue-avoidance for the future. They’d rather rehash the past, and you want to get them to move on.

Perfectionists

Who they are: They have high standards for themselves and everyone around them – whether it’s necessary or not. They don’t recognize the difference between good and good enough – and might waste time and resources on things that don’t deserve them.

How to deal: To help Perfectionists get out of their own way and stop them from interfering with others:

- Set goals and deadlines together early – whether you share the work responsibilities or delegate it.
- Talk about consequences. For instance, “If we miss this deadline, we’ll disappoint the customer and likely lose the next contract.”

Procrastinators

Who they are: They wait until the last minute for everything, throwing themselves and others into a panic. Even if it’s good work, it’s too stressful.

How to deal: To work better with Procrastinators:

- Break work into bite-size pieces with shorter deadlines.
- Praise good work, early starts and deadlines met.

Rescuers

Who they are: They help everyone to their detriment. They’re people-pleasers who overcommit and miss deadlines.

How to deal: To rescue Rescuers:

- Regularly remind them what’s on their plate and when it’s due.
- Help them identify time constraints. Say, “If you took on this task, how much time do you think it’ll take? When will you do it?”

Source: Paul Thornton, author of *Leadership: Perfecting Your Approach and Style*, speaker and professor, LeadChangeGroup.com

TECH CORNER

Try technology to take a break from technology

You know it’s good to take breaks from screens throughout the day.

But did you know sometimes using your technology screen to take a break from work can get the job done, too?

Here are five tech-based breaks that can fulfill the need to move, connect with others and challenge your mind in new ways:

- **Get moving.** Pull up physically active games such as Beat Saber, Wii Sports or Pokémon Go.
- **Belt it out.** Unadulterated singing relieves stress and motivates

(because we think we actually sound good)! So pull up a favorite track on YouTube’s karaoke site, Sing King, and let loose. Perhaps, close the door first.

- **Fire up a story** on your audio app. Take a quick walk while you listen.
- **Talk it up.** Join in an audio conversation on networking apps such as Clubhouse and Twitter Spaces to get fresh ideas or connect with like-minded professionals.
- **Bend your brain.** Try Jeopardy, Memory Match or Song Quiz via Amazon Echo while you stretch.

Info: Wall Street Journal, tinyurl.com/takeabreak503

COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

■ Need new ideas, outlooks? Mix up who interacts

People tend to gravitate to others like them. In the workplace, that often translates into like-minded ideas and actions – which won’t help teams and organizations move forward.

Consider this: Tabatha Rosproy is the first early childhood educator to be named the National Teacher of the Year. She’s also the first pre-K teacher in Kansas to head up a classroom inside a nursing home! The children have changed the residents’ outlook and the residents have opened the students’ eyes to exciting things.

What’s the most diverse, opposite end of the spectrum group you can get together for fresh perspectives?

Source: RD.com

■ New meeting rule: Bring a laptop

To level the professional playing field as employees continue with remote or hybrid work, communications expert and consultant Ben Decker shares this tip:

Ask every attendee, even those in person, to bring a laptop. Then have everyone tap into a virtual meeting.

That eliminates the side conversations and glances that often happen between just those on-site, which can lead to bias, oversights and slights.

Source: Decker.com

■ More confusing words

Here are eight more words many people often use incorrectly:

- **Lead vs. led.** Led is the past tense (not lead). Think of bleed and bled.
- **Leapt, burnt, dreamt, knelt.** That’s what the British say. Let’s keep it American English: Leaped, burned, dreamed, kneeled.
- **Cache vs. cachet.** Cache is a bunch of something (usually really good or bad). Think of a cache of weapons or jewelry. Cachet is about prestige. “No other CEO has the cachet of ours.”

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 Smart way to maintain balance working from home

Like a lot of people, I was working from home.

The flexibility was great. I felt just as productive – if not more. Part of the reason I felt that way was probably because I worked longer.

It's harder to turn off work when there isn't much separation between the office and the home – especially when there's *no* separation.

Many days, I'd find myself thinking, "There's just this one more thing I can get done." Then it was an hour later than I was supposed to be working.

I was getting burned out – and knew I needed to stop the cycle.

What worked for me was a low-tech, easy-to-implement solution.

Stop and move

I set an alarm for 5 p.m. That was my signal to immediately wrap up the work because I promised myself I'd exercise within the next half hour.

The hard stop to the day and immediate physical activity has helped me rebuild a work/life balance and avoid burnout.

(Catherin Quiambao, Head of Marketing, Eaton Square, Manila, Philippines)

2 Unique perk that helps employee morale

With more remote and hybrid work these days, many of the perks that once helped boost morale no longer fit.

People aren't hanging out to play ping pong and pool in the lounge area.

They aren't feasting in the stocked break room.

And they aren't going to after-hour events anymore.

Maybe they will again someday. We just don't know. But we know employees want to do what they like to do.

Take the time and explore

That's why one perk we offer stays relevant and boosts morale.

We offer employees a yearly vacation on the company's expense. They also get leave credits to use for the trip or otherwise.

We believe well-being and leisure go hand-in-hand.

So this perk helps them recharge and be their best when they're at work.

(Daisy Jing, Founder, Banish, Los Angeles, shared this success on SmallBizTrends)

3 Learn from each other, make fewer mistakes

We have great leaders across our organization. They reach goals and often set the bar higher.

They also make mistakes.

Of course, they rebound from their mistakes, either learning a lesson or overcoming the setback.

We hated to see another leader make a mistake their colleague already made. My personal mantra: If we make a mistake, I only want to make it one time. I don't want to make it 90 times.

Share challenges, best practices

That inspired us to start a weekly conference call (because our leaders were scattered throughout the country). The goal was – and is – to learn from each other.

Leaders talk about challenges and how they overcame them. Or they share best practices on issues they have in common.

It helps us avoid mistakes and continue to hit goals.

(Rick Hendrick, Owner, Hendrick Motorsports, Concord, NC, shared his success on the Don Yaeger podcast)



YOUR LEGAL COACH

Employee wants commute accommodation: Must we?

Question: An employee suffered an injury, but she can – and wants to – still do her work. However, the injury makes it difficult for her to get to work. She wants us to set up an accommodation for her commute. Must we?

Answer: No, says Fiona W. Ong, an employment attorney with Shawe Rosenthal LLP.

If the job requires the employee to be physically on-site, you're responsible for exploring reasonable accommodations *during work*. However, if the request for accommodation is before, after or plainly outside the scope of her work, you aren't obligated, Ong says.

Case in point: An appellate court recently ruled in favor of an employer because a commute was "a problem she faces outside the workplace unrelated to an essential job function or privilege of employment."

Source: tinyurl.com/commuterule503

LIGHTER SIDE

Oh, the things we ask IT!

IT is often the unsung hero in workplaces – not just for the magic they do to fix our technical problems but for the crazy requests they hear.

Here are some of the craziest:

- I washed my keyboard. Why isn't it working now?
- I need to take the Internet home – can you put it on a disk for me?
- It says 'Click OK' – what should I do?
- My wife threw my laptop in the pool – is it fixable?
- How do you say the plural of a computer mouse? Is it mice?
- Can you put me through to Google?
- I need your help. But can you promise not to tell anyone about this?

Source: Coburg Bank, tinyurl.com/IT503

COMMUNICATION NEWS

Work issues up when no one was ‘at work’!

In a year when many people weren't “at work,” you'd think HR-related work incidents would drop. Yet, they rose.

Almost 60% of HR managers said the number of issues reported to them climbed since the pandemic started, according to recent research from Paychex. A quarter of managers said incidents stayed the same.

They weren't tiny infractions. Almost 45% of employees received some kind of discipline while working from home, researchers said.

Top issues

Here are the top issues – and tips to avoid them going forward.

What Gen Z and millennials want from the boss

If you want to develop a crop of leaders, look to Gen Z and millennials (born 1989-2001).

To keep them loyal and engaged – so they become better leaders – try to give them more of what they want in their workplace.

4 expectations

Gallup researchers found these are the youngest generations' biggest expectations:

- **Care.** They want to work for a company that cares about their well-being. That includes a fair work/life balance and

- **Employee disputes.** Cyberbullying seems to be on the rise. You'll want to address it more specifically in workplace harassment policies and protocols – and get everyone to sign off on policies and consequences.
- **Employee benefits.** Researchers found employees are asking about and accessing mental health benefits more than ever. The pandemic stressed and overwhelmed them. There's no one-size-fits-all solution. Talk with employees about the kinds of benefits, resources and tools they need and how the company might better help them access those.

Source: *HRMorning.com*

attention to physical and mental health.

- **Ethics.** These employees want to work for and with people they trust. Note: This is also a huge expectation for boomers and Gen X.
 - **Transparency.** They want to work at companies where top leaders are open about operations, vision and performance – and are receptive to employee feedback.
 - **Diversity.** Younger employees want to work with and learn from a diverse group.
- Source: *tinyurl.com/expect503*

Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

Yes. The company won.

The employee's attorney claimed she was the victim of harassment based on gender. The mentor humiliated her, was rude and gave her dirty looks – similar to how she treated other women. All of that added up to a hostile work environment, so the employee was forced to quit, the attorney claimed.

The company's attorney argued there was no harassment, bias or hostile work environment. The mentor may have been brash, but her professional criticism and brushoff of the new employee didn't add up to harassment.

The court agreed: The mentor may have been rude, but she didn't single out this employee, and

the behavior was not on a level that created a hostile work environment.

Consider training

Leaders may want everyone to be kind and get along at work, but some people are abrasive. This case shows there's a difference between rude behavior and harassment.

To help people in leadership positions who might be considered abrasive, train them on how to handle difficult situations – even if that's taking situations straight to a manager or HR!

(Based on *Newbury v. City of Windcrest, TX*. Dramatized for effect.)

Quotes

Don't be pushed by your problems. Be led by your dreams.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.

– Albert Einstein

Two things define you: your patience when you have nothing and your attitude when you have everything.

– George Bernard Shaw

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