



Collaborations

Volume III, Issue 4

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Our prayers are
with all Americans
during this time of
national crisis.

~ ~ ~

Collaborations

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Book Corner ~ *The Trainer's Support Handbook* by Jean Barbazette

For those of you who are trainers, there is an excellent new tool available. *The Trainer's Support Handbook* by Jean Barbazette, President of The Training Clinic, is a comprehensive resource for all trainers who also have administrative work to do. Subjects include

- Getting Management Support
- Assessing Training Needs
- Hiring External Trainers
- Marketing Training Events
- Creating a Training Budget... and many more.

Each chapter begins with a self-assessment to help you identify whether you should read the whole chapter or just review the tools in the chapter. An appendix includes all the assessment questions and can be used as a way to audit your training department. The book is filled with tools such as worksheets, forms, checklists and job aids.

Whether you are new to training or experienced, this is a great resource!



Awkward Situations at Work

Question: Do you have any advice on how managers might handle events that happen which are not directly business related and might even be awkward? An extreme example would be the tragedy of September 11th. A less extreme example might be an employee who is returning after winning, or losing, a law suit against the company.



Collaborations Response

In general, we do think it very wise to address in some appropriate way almost anything which is happening in the work force and/or in the world around us. That is generally pretty easy to do if the event is positive, more difficult if it is negative.

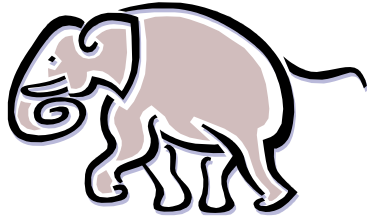
However, to ignore such an occurrence that is of note is like having an elephant in the middle of the room and trying to pretend that it isn't there! Everyone knows the elephant is there and is to some extent preoccupied with the elephant's presence.

First of all, to pretend the elephant isn't there is to be perceived as being out of touch. Second, simply acknowledging many things will allow people to no longer be preoccupied with them. Third, acknowledgment can often very effectively short circuit the "rumor mill."

Awkward Situations at Work

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Last, we believe that human beings need to process events, thoughts and feelings. Some of us do that processing inside ourselves. Many of us, however, aren't very good at processing inside our heads and need the opportunity to process outside ourselves. Examples of ways to examine our feelings and thoughts externally would be articulating them to others in a discussion or writing about them in a journal. This type of process can help us name the feelings, fears, concerns and thoughts and then determine how to deal with them.



It turns out our mothers were correct when they told us to "get it off your chest." Processing helps us more clearly assess and deal with issues and events. We just need to find the processing approach that works best for us in a given situation.

Let us address some specific comments to different scenarios.

Significant national or natural disasters

As we saw on September 11th the United States is now vulnerable. The completely unthinkable has happened. Surveys consistently indicate that a majority of the population in the US continues to experience low grade fear and anxiety. The tragedy of September 11th and subsequent events have practically been all consuming for many people.

To ignore what has happened and try to act like it's just "business as usual" is foolish. People bring all of themselves to work — the physical, emotional, intellectual, rational and irrational. Simply allowing or facilitating discussion of what has transpired and how people are reacting allows individuals, including ourselves, to deal with it in a more healthy way. It also is reassuring for people to find out that many of one's feelings and concerns are shared by others.

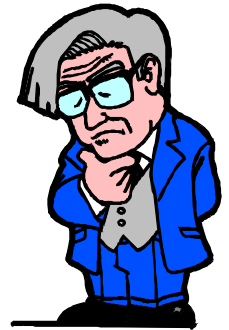
We are not advocating continually revisiting or dwelling on these events. However, providing an opportunity to discuss them can be healthy for all concerned. Many times managers and supervisors avoid these discussions because they believe they must have "the answers." That is a myth. You do not have to have the answers. Facilitating, and/or being a part of the discussion in these kinds of incredible times, is all that is reasonable to expect and it is effective. (If you are unsure how to facilitate the discussion, find a resource who can -- HR, a professional facilitator, etc.)

Awkward situations at work

Recently we were faced with a situation where an employee was asked to take a leave for an infraction which arguably might have been in a gray area. A grievance resulted. Pending final resolution, the individual was reinstated.

Our advice was to acknowledge the individual's return immediately upon his arrival. It isn't necessary or desirable to give a lot of details. In many cases because of legal constraints you can't give those details anyway. However, you can welcome the individual back and state some positive expectations for the future. You need to be proactive in framing the situation in a way that will be beneficial to all concerned and begin to positively move forward. That is often all that is required to acknowledge the elephant in the room and squelch the rumor mill.

To recap, your role as a manager or supervisor is to acknowledge the elephant and to provide vehicles for people to process situations or events.



Delegating ~ A Key Skill

In a recent set of workshops, participants generated a list of the reasons leaders should delegate. The lists were extensive. Items that were on the list each time included:

- For people to learn and grow
- To increase people's sense of responsibility and importance to the organization
- To reduce the leader's workload
- To get a new/different look at a problem

After this list was created, I asked participants why they don't delegate as much as they think they should. The answers included:

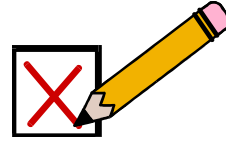
- I'm worried they won't get it done on time
- They won't do it the way I would do it
- When I follow up they think I am micro-managing
- When I've delegated in the past, it hasn't worked well

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Leadership Assessment ~ Environment

We have defined leadership in 4 key areas:

1. Relationship
2. Environment
3. Processes
4. Business Focus



In the last issue of *Collaborations*, we shared the Relationship portion of our assessment with you. This issue contains the Environment portion below. Processes and Business Focus will be in the next two issues. If you would like a copy of the entire assessment, send an e-mail to sgerke@att.net.

Here's the **Environment** portion of the assessment:

1 = I could use work in this area 2= I do OK in this area 3= I could help others in this area

- As a leader I: _____ Invite and use the ideas of others.
 _____ Treat mistakes as opportunities to learn.
 _____ Trust people to take responsibility.
 _____ Foster collaboration within my group.
 _____ Foster collaboration among groups.
 _____ Teach and learn from others.
 _____ Share leadership with followers.

These items deal with the environment or climate you create based on your behavior. If people are afraid to make mistakes, don't take on responsibility, or don't work collaboratively with others, is it them or is it you that's causing it? Think about it and be honest with yourself!

Delegating ~ A Key Skill

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Here is a suggested process for successful delegation.

1. Identify an appropriate project to delegate.
2. Identify an appropriate person to delegate it to.
3. Explain the project. Include due date and other particulars. Avoid telling them how to do it, unless there is a clear or required answer.
4. Set up a follow-up conversation within a day or so to discuss the person's questions. (This gives them time to read through or think through the information and formulate questions for you.)
5. Set up a schedule for the person to update you on progress. (With a planned update, you will know what's going on, but won't be perceived as micro- managing.)
6. When the project is complete, have a discussion about the work. Ask the person to first share his perception of what went well and what he would do differently next time.
7. Provide additional feedback, so the person learns for the next opportunity.
8. When you have a new project for this person, adjust your "check-in" schedule based on your new understanding of their abilities.



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Meeting Starter ~ "I Am"

Ask participants to complete the phrase "I am" five times on a sheet of paper.
(Example: I am 35 years old. I am a programmer. I am fun to be with.
I am married. I am leaving on vacation tomorrow.)

You can share this in a number of ways:

- 1) Have them get a partner. Both share their 5 statements. Have them find new partners and do the same. (do as many times as you can)**
- 2) Have them share in table groups.**
- 3) Have people share with the entire group one at a time until you've gone around the room five times.**



We'd Like to Hear From You

Do you have a question for us or a topic you would like us to write about? We'd love to hear from you. Send an e-mail to sgerke@att.net with your question or ideas. We can't respond to each individually, however we will respond in *Collaborations* based on topics most requested.