



Management and Performance Associates – Newsletter - June 2005

Conflicts

Do not condemn the judgement of another because it differs from your own. You may both be wrong. **Dandemis**

Being a trainer, we are always looking for quotes to use in our materials. When we came upon the above quote we realized that most of our training workshops actually reflect that spirit.

Especially for managers, it is so easy to disagree with staff members. This is one of the big corporate disconnects: We hire people because they are competent, smart, intelligent, creative and proactive. Unfortunately, when they voice their ideas and they conflict with our own, there is a tendency not to be so open-minded about it.

Obviously, if we do not explore each other's ideas, our solutions will not be optimized and the staff member will feel that they are not being listened to, resulting in a negative impact to their commitment and motivation.

So, what is a manager to do when listening to ideas and opinions that differ from his or her own?

These are our hints for the month, a selection from our workshops, which deal with influencing and managing conflict.

- 1) Control your impulse to jump to phrases like: "you are wrong", "that will never work", "that is not the way we have been doing things here", "I disagree", and most of all "yes, but..."
- 2) Instead, try something new and innovative: LISTEN. By listening you will learn and understand the other person's perspective. What seems

like a crazy idea may have its merits. Not to mention that your positions may not be that far apart.

- 3) Demonstrate that you are listening. This may be the most powerful tool to improve relationships (Take this advice to your personal life as well, and you will thank us forever...)
- 4) Summarize what you hear, paraphrase, make their contributions valued.
- 5) Explore possibilities; ask questions, real, good, open-ended questions. Do not disguise your opinions as questions (another typical corporate mistake, something like: "Don't you think it would be important to have this project finished by Friday?")

Obviously, you do not need to agree with everything that you hear. But at least, demonstrate that you are listening, considering their input, and exploring possibilities.

And then, only after you have listened, demonstrated that you have listened, and explored the other party's input, is it time to present your own point of view.

Don't jump to problem solving. Even if you have no question whatsoever that your idea is the best thing in the world, consider the "what ifs." There is a probability that your idea will not work. There is a probability that someone else may have a better idea. And, as the quote from the beginning of this newsletter says, there is a possibility that you are both wrong.



The name of the game is: explore, analyze, discuss, consider advantages and disadvantages, and then make your decision. Your staff members will be committed and motivated if they feel their ideas were taken in consideration, even if the final decision is yours. It is the process that matters.

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

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