



## Management and Performance Associates – May 2010

### When the boss generates jealousy among team members

*“He who commits injustice is ever made more wretched than he who suffers it.”*

**Plato, Greek Philosopher**

**London | Scene 1:** Tom could not believe what he was listening to. His boss was proudly receiving a personalized recognition from the general manager, in front of all his colleagues, just after finishing a presentation about growth strategies. The comments related to a presentation prepared by Tom. He was livid, not only due to the sensation of unfairness but also due to his boss not recognizing his merits in public.

**Buenos Aires | Scene 2:** Angela could not dissimulate her anger as she listened, for the third time in a week, the public recognition Marcelo was getting from their boss. She thought the recognition was unfair and not in line with his accomplishments. What was worse was the recognition always started with the same words: “It would be nice if you all followed Marcelo’s example...”

**Singapore | Scene 3:** One word was enough to send Andy’s emotions spinning out of control: effort. His boss, without any trace of emotional intelligence, said in public: “I want to announce that Joan is the one getting the yearly bonus, due to her effort and loyalty consistently demonstrated throughout the year.”

These three simple examples (unfortunately frequently repeated all over the world) have one point in common: **jealousy among peers and teammates, due to the unfairness produced by their bosses.** Wikipedia defines jealousy as “an emotional, mental and behavioral response which arises from the “jealous” person’s perception of an external threat that endangers an important personal relationship with the other person.”

We face a very complex situation when the boss is the one provoking jealousy among his team. This situation produces three immediate and demolishing impacts in the employees: **anger** (*emotional response*), **lack of trust** (*mental*

*response*) and **de-motivation** (*behavioral response*). Worst, most bosses are not even aware that their attitude is provoking jealousy. This may be due to their inability to read other people’s emotions, or simply for being unaware of the negative impact of their actions.

**In summary, jealousy brings highly negative consequences to the organization.** In addition to the ones mentioned above, there is also stress, wide gossiping, reduced cooperation and the increase in the number of people looking for better and greener pastures in other organizations.

Therefore, if you have the privilege and the responsibilities of being a people manager, remember that these three ideas may help you to avoid unfair situations and jealousy among your team members:

**1 | Do all that you can to avoid creating situations which may be interpreted as unfair, arbitrary or that demonstrate favoritism.**

- **Establish clear and concrete performance standards.**

As mentioned in our August 2008 newsletter, Olympic athletes have the rule of the game very clear: if someone finishes a millionth of a second ahead of their mark, the medal belongs to the other person. Of course, this does not take care of the disappointment, but guarantees a clean and fair process. Clear rules of the game, unfortunately, are not always the case in the corporate world. Seldom, employees have a clear idea of their performance level, especially when compared to their peers. Managers must establish, beforehand, clear and precise performance standards. These standards need to be communicated without ambiguity, and to be enforced, to all team members.

Public recognition, in addition to highlighting the deserving employee, sets an example to all team members. In order not to create a sensation of unfairness among team members, managers need to be 200% sure about having clearly and



specifically established the rules of the game (goals and expectations) and to highlight concrete data that supports performance. Being jealous for being second is not the issue. The problem is not recognizing who got their first. As we all know, in the Olympic Games all is recorded by the cameras. There is no doubt about who was the first. In corporate life, substitute the cameras by the objective data that support your feedback.

- **Write down on your hand, using un-erasable ink: The only thing to be rewarded is performance above expectations. Do not prepare toxic mixes.**

Thank your employees who demonstrate effort to perform a task. Develop the ones who show potential. Rewards should only be given to employees whose effort and potential have been translated into performance that exceed the goal. Any other combination is going to be perceived as unfair, and will be generating jealousy. To avoid generating another Andy from Singapore, we need to work beforehand in defining and communicating clear and objective rules so that employees can identify themselves (or not) as High Performers. The biggest challenge is that other team members can see the High Performer as such. A very good way to do this is to remember the acronym: SMART (see below)

- **Be sure not to have lunch with the same employee, all the time.**

There are plenty of reasons to have a private lunch with a direct report: To discuss a special project, to better know the employee, to understand his/her motivations, to understand personal or work problems, or to conduct a coaching session. The problem is when you ONLY have lunch with ONLY this person. The idea is to have several private lunches, ensuring that you have lunch with each one of them, at different times. You will prevent a serious headache and tons of gossips.

## 2 | Go the extra mile: improve your emotional intelligence.

Soon after Reading about the topic (*"Primal Leadership", by Daniel Goleman is a great beginning*) be alert to the signs that indicate possible jealousy in your environment. If they do show up, talk as soon as possible to the person who appears to show that emotion. Understand what is

going on with him/her, listen, and ask for examples of how your actions may be negatively impacting this person and the team in general. Ask them to provide clear examples when this may be happening. Ask yourself: Am I the one causing this situation?

## 3 | Create a trusting environment.

Invite your team members to develop their own emotional intelligence, becoming aware of their own emotions, talking about them and venting positive and negative emotions as soon as they surface. Help them to do it.

This early awareness as well the possibility of sharing the issue will help to improve the trusting climate among your team members.

**Finally, remember the wise words of Spanish playwright Jacinto Benavente, loosely translated:**

***"Jealousy is not created by what you see. Imagination is enough"***

SMART

S: Specific

M: Measurable

A: Attainable

R: Relevant to the business strategy

T: Time bound

## Sharing best practices

### Professional jealousy?

*Who benefits from it? What is the group interaction strategy behind professional relationships? For how long can a manager maintain an individual growth strategy instead of a long term group plan? How does one leverage resources without creating subdivisions in the team? Which strategy should be used in order to be effective in coaching/mentoring, without appearing to distribute time in an uneven matter? By answering these questions one knows where to start to build a highly effective team. The following are some practices to favor equity and the better distribution of resources among a team:*

- **Staff meetings**

Create a space where the team can share their strategy and discuss topics that are critical to them.



- **Mentoring**

Adopt a formal program to exchange experiences and to enrich the professional development of at least one high potential manager once a year.

- **Team building activities**

Work at least once a year in building the basis for trust, with clear objectives and expected results. Leverage individual and group potential strengths.

- **Talent Review Program**

Manage special plans for all your direct reports, including the identification of successors, high potential employees and people ready to be promoted, identifying growth needs, courses and seminars. Follow up one on one, at least twice a year.

*Martin Krawiecki | CITI | Buenos Aires  
Latin America Client Service Head  
Global Transaction Services*

**See you next month. Suggestions are welcome.**

To know more of our training programs, please send us an e-mail to:

[sergio.pereira@mapa-way.com](mailto:sergio.pereira@mapa-way.com) or

[sonia.dondice@mapa-way.com](mailto:sonia.dondice@mapa-way.com)

Visit our website:

[\*\*www.mapa-way.com\*\*](http://www.mapa-way.com)