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Consider This ...



Humor in the Workplace

Research has shown that people like and are more productive with appropriately humorous leaders. Why? First, the environment is perceived as cheerful, fun, friendly and relaxed. Second, a funny leader is perceived to be more motivating. Third, a funny leader can be perceived as easygoing, which could result in people being less worried about receiving negative evaluations.

So what is appropriate humor?

- It encourages a positive atmosphere and builds confidence by being supportive.
- It builds rapport and trust and is based on caring.
- It brings people together. It's inclusive and shared.
- It decreases prejudice by focusing on universal human experiences.
- Humor can be self-effacing and model how to poke fun at yourself without being negative or too self-critical.

Warning: The more culturally diverse the audience, the harder it is to be humorous. What is funny in one culture may not translate well to another!

(From the talk on Leadership Lessons by Dr. Mimi Hull.)



Six Things People Love to Hear

- **I've heard good things about you.** Letting someone know that they're liked by others helps them to like you. Warning: If you say, I have heard things about you, they will fear it's negative!
- **I think we have ___ in common.** Holding things in common builds a relationship. Food, geography, people, find a connection!

- **I'm following up about ____.** Following up is very important and very few people do!
- **Let's set a definite time to get together!** Rather than a lukewarm offer to get together "at some point," get it on the calendar.
- **Let me see if I understand where you're coming from.** This shows that you are listening.
- **I'm not sure about *that* but I think we can do *this*.** The that-this dynamic is effective because it acknowledges the other's perspective and gives them a concrete option. Just because something isn't a person's first choice doesn't mean it's a bad one.

(From Communication Skills Program - Dr. Mimi Hull.)

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Seven Leadership Flaws

Here are seven flaws that will derail your leadership potential.

1. Not being able to handle criticism -

You're not perfect! If someone cares enough to share criticism, listen and, if needed, make changes.

2. Not delegating - Delegation is difficult. If they really lack skill, get them training or hire someone that can do it. Running things smoothly and efficiently does not mean doing it all yourself!

3. Know it all - Many of our greatest leaders understand that they can't possibly know everything and hire or engage people that know more than they do about a particular subject!

4. Procrastination - Often procrastination is a result of having no plan or priorities. Look into time management and goal setting to learn how to overcome procrastination.

5. Lack of focus - Things will come up that will distract you, and you need a clear set of priorities. Doing a little bit of everything gets nothing finished and causes stress.

6. Afraid to change - Change is essential not only in technology, but also in how you handle people, the way you market and in every aspect of your organization. Holding on to old ways because they've always been done that way is a path to failure. To improve, make changes, even if it means being uncomfortable at first.

7. Under appreciating your people - Your people ARE your organization and need to feel appreciated. They also want to be trained, developed and grown. As a leader, treat your organization like a garden. If you water, fertilize and weed your garden, it will continue to reap a quality harvest year after year.



Leading Peers? Step Back to Move Forward

Leadership is often seen as an act that requires stepping forward to assume authority. However, with peers, share your authority and lead from the middle. In other words, step back! Peer leadership, once trained, can have a very potent effect on an organization. Let's start with some helpful hints.

Listen more than you speak. Before you act, listen to your peer's assessment of the situation. Do they want or need help? No one likes a meddler, but most of us appreciate a helper. If people want help, do not pull a "command and control" or "takeover" act.

Identify the true problem before you act. The presenting issues may only be a

symptom of a larger issue. Size up the situation and assess what you can and cannot do as well as what you will or won't do.

Stand back. Work **with** your peer. Think like a film director. You are the one behind the camera. The actors are doing the work. You are simply putting things in focus and providing some direction. Be willing to lend a hand but don't take over. Remember that you are a colleague, not a boss.

One step forward, two steps back. Sometimes the need to act is urgent. Crisis provokes a call for immediate action. Work side by side with peers in their arena. Be there, assist and when the crisis is over, step back and let your peer resume control.

Don't overreach. Ask what authority they want you to have. Often there are rivalries among peers, so sharing authority can be tricky and one misstep can be treacherous.

Leading peers gets you noticed as someone who knows how to make things happen while respecting others and developing trust. Those who can lead from the middle are rare but essential elements of any enterprise.

Start Working on Yourself!

Our experience brings us to a simple but troubling truth: Most bosses reach a level of proficiency and stop there—short of what they could and should be.

Organizations usually have a few great managers, some capable ones, a horde of mediocre ones, some poor ones and some awful ones. (Harvard Business Review, 2011) The great majority of people are well intentioned, smart, accomplished individuals. Many progress but too many derail and fail to live up to their potential. Why? Because they stop working on themselves!

Managers rarely ask themselves, "How am I doing?" and "Do I need to improve?" ... unless they're shocked into it! When did you last ask these questions? "On the spectrum of great to awful bosses, where do I fall?" "Am I good enough?" "This may be a great opportunity, but am I ready?"

Most organizations offer their managers minimal support and training and rarely encourage them to improve. Few expect more of their leaders than short-term

results, which by themselves don't necessarily indicate real management skill. Setting goals is only the first half of what's required. You also need to know where you are on your journey and what you must do to make progress.

Ask for feedback. Typically, the higher you are in an organization, the less performance feedback you get. When we do a 360° feedback assessment with leaders, they learn their strengths and opportunities for improvement. To grow you need more than one stimulus. You need work experience. You need training and you need to intentionally change and grow, even if it is uncomfortable in the short run. Set personal goals. Get coaching. Take advantage of training programs. Create a network of trusted advisers, including role models and mentors. Making the effort isn't easy ... but definitely rewarding. So get to work!



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Call Dr. Mimi!

Are you feeling stressed? Could your organization use some revitalization?

Call Dr. Mimi!!!

Dr. Mimi Hull is a fully licensed psychologist who has a doctoral minor in management and a master's in counseling and personnel services from U. of Florida. Her B.A. in psychology is from Syracuse University. She holds many assessment certifications and licenses including MBTI (Myers Briggs) and DiSC® as well as the Optimal Feedback survey system.

Her most requested programs are in the areas of Team Building, Leadership, Conflict Management and Board Development.

Call her for a FREE consultation!



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by Dr. Mimi Hull

THE corporate couch



Dear Dr. Mimi:

I am a difficult person! I know it! I am not proud of it, but I tend to be negative. I often start out being very skeptical, and as a result have been told that I can be negative, and I know this is true. I don't enjoy being this way, and I am ready to work on changing both my behavior and my outlook. Where do I start?

—Negative Nancy

Dear Negative Nancy:

You have started! You have taken a great first step and that is realizing that you have negative tendencies and deciding that you want to be more positive. Congratulations!

Here is a great first activity: Instead of dwelling on an individual's disagreeable qualities and actions, focus on the person's best qualities. It is important to realize that everyone has something worth appreciating. Yes, everyone! Focus on one, two or more aspects of a person that are desirable—perhaps his or her character, personality, appearance or way of working. Perhaps you can identify something that you could apply to yourself. Once you have identified those positive qualities, write them down. Keep your list in a place where you can refer to it and add to it. You may even want to challenge yourself to see how long of a list you can make and how many people you can refocus on. Is this easy? No! Is it worthwhile? Absolutely! Go for it!

—Dr. Mimi

Dr. Mimi Hull heads Hull & Associates, a team of trainers, speakers and consultants. A licensed psychologist, she has a master's in counseling and personnel services and a doctorate in psychology with specialization in business management from the University of Florida, Gainesville. Her B.A. in psychology is from Syracuse (N.Y.) University. Reach her at www.HullOnline.com or DrMimi@HullOnline.com.

by Dr. Mimi Hull

THE corporate couch



Dear Dr. Mimi:

How do I deal with customers who yell at me? I work for an organization, and there have been some problems with our billing. I have listened to people literally screaming into the phone. It is not my fault, as we are moving to a new system and the kinks are still being ironed out. I have no control, and yet I feel like I am being blamed.

—Yelled At

Dear Yelled At:

Of course, my first question is: "What has your organization been doing to head off the crisis?" Have you notified people about what has happened, or are you just waiting for

people to "discover" it? In any case, your best response is to simply listen and let your angry customers get it out of their system. When they stop talking, ask if there is anything else that would be important for you to know. Let them know you "feel their pain," and that the problem is being worked on. Tell the callers you are sorry for their inconvenience. Let them know what you are able to do, but also what you have no control over. If you know when things will be running smoothly again, let them know that as well. Whatever you do, don't yell back or escalate the argument. Keep reminding yourself that your job is to listen and calm the angry customers, so that they want to and will remain customers. Your job is not to fix the system.

—Dr. Mimi

Dr. Mimi Hull heads Hull & Associates, a team of trainers, speakers and consultants. A licensed psychologist, she has a master's in counseling and personnel services and a doctorate in psychology with specialization in business management from the University of Florida, Gainesville. Her B.A. in psychology is from Syracuse (N.Y.) University. Reach her at www.HullOnline.com or DrMimi@HullOnline.com.