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The Corporate Communicator

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Hull & Associates

225 S. Swoope Avenue
Suite 210

Maitland, Florida 32751

Phone: (407) 628-0669

www.hullonline.com

Email:

info@hullonline.com

Twitter: **DrMimi**

Our Staff

Dr. Mimi Hull President

drmimi@hullonline.com

Barbara May ... Office Mgr.

Jasmine Flores Intern

Hailey vonHassler Intern

Kenzie Whittaker Intern

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Consider This ...



Do You Have a Purpose?

In this era of Millennials in the workforce, the concept of purpose has resurfaced as an important consideration both personally and professionally.

Personally, it is comparatively simple to establish if we reflect on who we are, who we want to be, what we want to be associated with, and how we want to be remembered. Using these markers, we can begin to establish what we value and where our purpose lies.

Purpose is also important at work. We have found that employees want more than a job. Motivation, in the long-term, hinges more on achieving a sense of purpose than on short-term perks and monetary success.

When we facilitate strategic plans,

creating the vision and establishing the values are often the most discussed parts of the plan. Once these are established, everything else falls in place more easily.

How do you know if there is a sense of purpose at work? Does your organization have a vision with concrete plans toward central goals? Are they common knowledge? Are they a part of your performance review? Is there community concern and social impact? And is your organizational working culture aligned with these goals?

If your answers are an emphatic "yes," you have a sense of purpose at work. If not, there is work to be done both organizationally and individually!

Nonfunctioning Board Members – What to Do!

What do you do with a Board member who rarely shows up, is unreliable, a procrastinator, or worse? If you're the Board president or an officer, you respond! Things will NOT get better spontaneously. If you are the Executive Director, you may need to discuss this with your Board leadership.

Some Board members just need a personal reminder and others may want to leave the Board and will appreciate a way out.

Explore whether he or she really has the time now to be an active Board member. Hopefully, you have had an orientation that clarified expectations. If not, it is vital to do so.

There may be health/personal reasons why a good member isn't

participating as expected. Suggest a leave of absence, if they cannot contribute fully for a while.

If they are not carrying out a specific task, assign someone to help, letting them know that the job needs to be done and explore if there is a less time-consuming way for them to be involved.

If there are several "difficult" Board members, consider whether Board participation is, in fact, meaningful and what can be done to make it more so. Review your expectations to see if they are realistic and what can be changed to make it easier to participate. Redesign jobs and responsibilities to fit the needs of a busy achiever. Reduce the number of committees and meetings and utilize short-term task forces instead. **And, remember, Board membership is NOT for everyone!**

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Preparing for Generation Z

The next generation of workers has arrived! College educated Gen Z graduates this year, and brings new defining factors to the workforce.

The realist generation. Raised by skeptic Gen X during the recession, Gen Z looks at their career differently than the Millennials who were optimistic dreamers. Gen Z is concerned with keeping up and “surviving,” and have the tools to do so!

Be patient with the impatient. Gen Z is not a patient generation, and is used to having all information available at all times. A challenge arises when a Gen Z fears they are missing out. Structured updates and influx of information are key.

Be a guide, not a source. Even as youth, Gen Z was used to accessing all information at all times. They are accustomed to teachers guiding them through the vast abundance of

information on the internet, rather than having instructors serve as their key source of information. When developing a management environment, remember Gen Z wants to be led, not taught.

The digital generation. Gen Z is notoriously tech savvy, and with the influx of technological advances, Gen Z can lead the way to implementation. Gen Z will prefer up-to-date technologies, and a lack thereof might frustrate them.

Juggling hobbies and jobs. Gen Z has an entrepreneurial spirit, and it is typical to find them making money on the side with hobbies. Don’t fear! Gen Z employees are resourceful and see the value of a steady income. So long as their work is not affected, don’t be alarmed by the income-generating hobbies of Gen Z.

Remember these attributes and you will reap the benefits this generation provides!

Texting—Is It Appropriate for the Workplace?

As new technologies make their way into business, and the standards for communication change, the question I am often asked is—is texting appropriate in the workplace?

The short answer is—it depends! Written communication like emails or texts can be more efficient and convenient in a busy work environment. However, they are not always the best format for interpersonal communications. Here are a few things you should know:

Recognize the negatives of the written word. Sending a written recap of a verbal conversation is fine. If there is just a text or email and the nonverbal and tonal cues of a verbal conversation are missing, issues are more likely to be misunderstood and misinterpreted. When things are misinterpreted, mistakes are made and conflicts arise.

Keep in mind the context. While texting may be a great way to speed up the process of sending a quick memo, it should never be used for emotionally charged situations. It is unprofessional to send a text that could be misinterpreted...and when a message

elicits emotion it is more likely to be taken negatively!

Know your audience. When it comes to connecting with your employees or coworkers, try to communicate in the way **they** prefer! For coworkers under 50, texting might be their preferred method of communication. However, if someone prefers verbal interaction, use the phone or, if possible, have a face-to-face conversation. In doing so, you’ll create the most effective platform for understanding and building a stronger relationship.

Set a policy. If you plan to allow email and text communications in your workplace, let your employees know what are the expectations and restrictions. Set a policy for the context in which a text vs. verbal communication is preferred. Inform people if the text or email is being saved and is a part of their record. In this way, confusion about the processes can be avoided.

If the above parameters are met, you can begin to take advantage of the efficiency of text communications while maintaining a professional work environment!

The Key to Great Communication!

We are often asked to do training on communication. When we suggest that we should emphasize listening, sometimes we are met with resistance. Though being a good listener is touted as a personal strength, it is often overlooked as a professional asset and thus infrequently built upon as a skill. In fact, listening is a critical skill both personally and professionally. If you improve your listening skills, you will improve your communication skills!

Good listening improves the productivity of meetings, builds professional relationships, and can eliminate and/or settle potential disputes in your professional life. Without good listening skills, we get caught in misunderstandings and needless reiteration.

It is important to differentiate between hearing and listening. When we just hear, we are aware of the sounds but our minds wander and we miss out on the content! Valuing and improving active listening is key. We need to know how to sharpen

listening skills—just like we would reading or writing skills.

A first key to building your listening skills is simply appreciating listening, not just as a courtesy you give others but also for its being an active skill. Motivate your listening with curiosity, not obligation. Ask questions to further your investment in the conversation and listen to the answers.

Being a good listener doesn't mean you don't contribute to the conversation. In fact, it adds value to your contributions. Repeat back what you hear to keep engaged. Equally important is the nonverbal engagement you add. Eye contact and subtle gestures go a long way in asserting your interest in the conversation.

Finally, by actively listening to the topic at hand without jumping to formulate your response or insert your opinions, you get a clearer view of what your conversation partner is trying to express, and you can both gain the most learning and understanding as you interact!

(Call us for Communications Training.)

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Dr. Mimi Hull is a fully licensed psychologist who has helped many organizations improve communication, leadership and team building. She can help you, your organization, your board and/or your staff.

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E-mail -

DrMimi@Hullonline.com

Phone - (407) 628-0669



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Email -
DrMimi@HullOnline.com
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 by
Dr. Mimi Hull

THE
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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.

Dear Dr. Mimi:

I work in a fairly small office, and we feel like our boss is doing her own thing. She doesn't act like she's on board with any of our ideas, but she doesn't reject them, either. Recently it's gotten so bad I don't even think she listens to them.

My co-workers and I have good benefits and don't want to step on anyone's toes, but we want to get through to her. I'm just worried about our company.

—*Unheard*

Dear Unheard:

If your boss is not listening to any of you, she probably wants to keep control and may feel threatened by you all. Instead of telling her what you think should be done, ask questions that will enable her to consider options without feeling like she is losing control. Instead of saying, "I think that we should do _____," try saying something like, "What do you think about trying _____?"

That way it becomes her idea, and she is not threatened by the suggestions.

—*Dr. Mimi*

 by
Dr. Mimi Hull

THE
corporate couch



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.

Dear Dr. Mimi:

I think I have done a good job at hiring my employees and showing them I care about them. However, I may manage them more than I should. I worry about them, check up on them and have to hold back from helping them every step of the way. This may be annoying to them. I don't want to be a micromanager, but I also don't want to neglect them. I'm just wondering how much is too much?

—*Micromanager*

Dear Micromanager:

When I train on leadership, I often quote Theodore Roosevelt, who once said, "The best executive is the one who has enough sense to pick good people to do what he wants done and enough self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it." That said, you have delegated certain tasks to certain people. Now, be confident that you have chosen excellent people to perform those tasks.

Set the standard for performance and let staffers find their own ways to achieve it. If you need to know a project's status before it is due, set up checkpoints ahead of time. For example, tell a staff member that, in three weeks, you will want to know how he or she is doing and whether assistance is needed. Check in at only the scheduled time and not before. When an employee needs help, he or she will ask. Trust your choices and your team members' capabilities. They will surely make you proud.

—*Dr. Mimi*