

HULL &  
ASSOCIATES

# The Corporate Communicator

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## Hull & Associates

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## Consider This ...



## Engaging Board Members - 10 Quick Tips

1. Always have name tags. This sounds basic but more often than not, people can't recall names and there are no name tags.

2. Have a bulleted bio with a picture of each Board member in the Board orientation materials. Give current Board members a picture and bio of new members.

3. Ask committee preferences. Some people join boards to share their professional expertise. Others want to do something completely different.

4. Assign new board members a "board buddy" to serve as a mentor, a greeter and a question answerer.

5. Send out minutes from the board meetings, highlighting any votes or

important actions. Share past ones with new members

6. Let your Board know the Good, the Bad and the Ugly. If they only know the good, they may feel you don't really need their help.

7. Periodically do a warm up/icebreaker that fosters engagement. Just don't call it an icebreaker!

8. Divide the agenda into three sections to stimulate thinking: "hindsight, foresight, and insight," so the Board can be always be thinking strategically.

9. Hold a discussion with your board about how to provide positive public relations and appropriate advocacy.

10. Revisit your mission. Are you still doing what you say you do? Board members want to be Mission Motivated!

## Got an Attitude Issue?

Attitude issues, while often toxic, are often avoided rather than addressed. Addressing an 'attitude' needs to be a smooth and predictable process and here's how to make it easier.

**It's a perception/behavior problem - Not an attitude one.** It is hard to receive criticism on "your attitude" and it is far more likely to incite anger and denial than reflection. However, if the issue is posed as a problem of "perception" by yourself and others and specific behaviors are mentioned, the involved party is more likely to reflect on their behavior and change. You cannot "see" attitude, but you can recognize behaviors.

**Focus on your feelings.** When you approach someone with an 'attitude' issue, say how it makes you feel. If you

do this, it is easier for the person to internalize remorse over anger. This can be the first step in helping them reflect on their actions and change.

**In final efforts, be clear, not emotional.** As a manager in situations that could result in disciplinary action or termination, it is key that in any interaction, especially in written documentation and communication, that you focus on objective behaviors. Make a point to reference exact actions and words used by the person in question, and focus, again, on impact and breach of expectations.

If the focus is in the right place, and the right approach is taken, your tricky "attitude problems" can be dealt with in a consistent and effective manner. It's all about the approach!

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## Now That's a Question!

Think about the people that you like. Usually, these people are good listeners. We like the people who listen and one thing that most good listeners do is ask questions. **Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between asking more questions and likability.** People who ask more questions are seen as more responsive. They focus on others in the conversation and seek information from them. There is an art to good questioning. Be sure to:

**Know what you want to find out so you can construct your question appropriately.** Don't ask something if you don't care about the answer. Your boredom will show!

**Ask open ended questions** that invite people to say more than one or two word answers. Use beginning phrases like "Why, How, Tell me more..."

## Handling Workplace Bullying

There are many articles about bullying in schools and cyber bullying. However, workplace bullying is often overlooked.

According to the Workplace Bullying Institute, workplace bullying is **four times more common than sexual harassment or racial discrimination.** Bullying is verbal or physical abusive conduct that is intimidating, humiliating, or frightening. It can also be sabotage and work interference which prevents your work from getting done. It is both acts of commission (doing things to others) or omission (withholding resources from others)

People are affected by bullying, both as a target and a witness. The targets of workplace bullying are often the stronger workers, or a veteran worker who are perceived to be a threat to the Bully. The Bully feels threatened by the success of others, and puts people down to fool observers to think they are strong.

The negative effects of bullying can cost the company.

Bullying creates a toxic workplace culture which causes people to take sides, or under-perform in order to stay off the bully's radar.

**Don't interrupt.** Let people finish their thoughts even if you "know" what they are going to say.

**Ask follow-up questions.** Use something in their answer to frame your next question. It show that you listened!

**Avoid leading questions.** If you want someone's opinion, ask it without giving yours. "What did you like about the conference?" is better than "That was a great conference, wasn't it?"

**Avoid jargon** and phrases that you might know the meaning of, but they don't. If someone doesn't seem to understand what you are asking, try rephrasing it.

Asking questions is good, but asking too many, or the wrong type of, questions can be more harmful than helpful. You don't want to sound like you are interrogating them!

The targets of the bullying lose confidence and their performance suffers.

If no action is taken, the target will leave the organization, which costs the organization a good employee and the cost of hiring someone new.

The cycle will continue if not stopped. By not acting, you tacitly endorse bullying. To prevent or to stop it, you need to implement a plan where you:

- Clearly define what is bullying.
- Do not ask for relief from the bully's boss. That is the person who loves or fears them most.
- Construct a system for reporting instances of bullying.
- Make the business case that the bully is "too expensive to keep."
- Implement an investigation process for complaints.
- Enforce consequences against bullying.
- Have a strict no-tolerance stance against bullying.

These measures can help to rid you of workplace bullying, and can also be used to prevent it from happening and ensure a safe environment for all.

## The Generations...a Different Perspective!

The Generations ARE different...and while generations may express things in diverse ways, their wants and needs from a workplace environment have similarities. For example:

**The desire to be respected and heard.** Though Generation Y/ Millennials get the label for craving recognition, being recognized is a desire shared by all generations and people. People want some level of assurance that their contributions are noticed, and while the preferred method of praise may change person to person, the desire to be respected, understood, and heard is common to all.

**The desire to make a difference.** All generations and people want to feel that what they do counts. Again, they have dissimilar ways of expressing this desire – from rallies and social movements, to consumer decisions and brand support, but the motivation and desires are shared! It is important for each generation to know how their “piece of the puzzle”

contributes to the whole and without their doing their best, the product or service or ideal is compromised.

**The desire to transcend their stereotypes.** No generation is particularly keen of the negative aspects of the stereotypes they’ve been assigned. Millennials don’t like to be described as lazy, just as some Baby Boomers dislike being labeled technology-illiterate. All generations desire to define their own individual characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. So while it’s important to keep trends in mind, we need to avoid stereotyping people and pigeonholing them by their generation or any other stereotype. Just as each generation has defining factors, each individual does as well!

We should use generational differences as a guide, but recognize that each person is unique in his/her personality and tendencies and learning and responding to each person’s individuality is good, not only for the individual but for the organization as well.

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**CC** by  
Dr. Mimi Hull

THE  
corporate couch

**Dear Dr. Mimi:**

I need help with distributing bonuses. Unfortunately, despite extra efforts by the team and me, our performance was average and the bonus pool isn't as large as it was in past years.

I could give the same bonus to everyone, but some people have more complex jobs and others have only been with us a short time. Second, I could give bonuses to the highest performers to reward their efforts and motivate others to up their game. Lastly, I could keep the bonus for myself and tell my employees that, because of our performance, we aren't doing bonuses this year.

What should I do?

—*Money on My Mind*

**Dear Money:**

Because the bonus pool is more modest than it has been in the past, it would be more beneficial to your people to distribute the bonuses to your staff by creating a baseline bonus amount, and then distributing another merit-based bonus for your more diligent employees.

It's not right to keep the bonus for yourself; your staff deserves the recognition.

—*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](http://www.HullOnline.com) or [DrMimi@HullOnline.com](mailto:DrMimi@HullOnline.com).

**CC** by  
Dr. Mimi Hull

THE  
corporate couch

**Dear Dr. Mimi:**

I drive a company car, and I think it's fine to run a few personal errands on my lunch break and in between visits to my clients. My husband takes issue with this. He thinks it's stealing and says I should wait until the end of the day when I'm back in my own car.

What do you think?

—*Driving*

**Dear Driving:**

Your company is lending you their car to use for work. If you wouldn't leave in the middle of your workday in the office to run your errands, it doesn't seem appropriate to use your company's resources for your own errands. I agree with your husband. Unless it's during your lunch break, wait until the end of the day to finish your errands.

—*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](http://www.HullOnline.com) or [DrMimi@HullOnline.com](mailto:DrMimi@HullOnline.com).