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The Corporate Communicator

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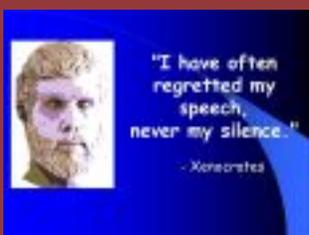
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Consider this...



H's of Volunteering

Volunteers help organizations stay efficient, augment various roles and bring communities together. Sometimes organizations struggle with keeping their volunteers engaged. These four H's will help.

Health. Volunteering is proven to increase people's health. However, some volunteers feel a greater pressure to perform than paid staff! They will even show up when they are sick!

Overload and working with sick people leads to illness. Let them know that taking a break or "sick leave" will have them coming back healthier, recharged and eager to participate.

Happiness. Volunteers want to be happy. Should negative emotions or irritability arise, don't let things fester.

Deal with them! Resolving conflicts boosts the happiness factor and helps to boost morale. It also lets volunteers know how important their efforts are to the organization.

Home. New environments can be intimidating for volunteers. Creating an atmosphere that makes the organization feel like a 2nd home helps to reduce stress. Be sure volunteers know where things are, what things they can use and what opportunities they can participate in, so that they have a sense of belonging and feeling "in" on things.

Humor. Keep a sense of humor. We all make mistakes. Being able to laugh at them helps volunteers feel accepted and appreciated. After all, volunteering should be fun for everyone!

Dealing With a Hot Head

Clients may get very angry and knowing how to deal with anger is vital during conflict.

Don't reciprocate aggression. Be sure to control your own feelings. Breathe deeply and calm your nerves. Being hostile can damage company relations and escalate a situation that is already high stress. Remember, you represent more than yourself.

Validate their emotions and let them feel angry. Remember that anger is a natural feeling. They have a right to feel anger just as you do. Although you may not agree with the reason behind it, you can't deny their feeling. Let them know that they are being taken seriously.

Center the conversation on the problem. The angry person may begin to rant about non-related problems

they had throughout the week! Stay focused on the root of the problem and how to work together to solve it.

Help the client regain control. "Kill them with kindness" is an effective way to diffuse a situation. Displaying respect or kindness in the face of adversity can bring a person back to their senses. Caring is known to be a fast mood changer.

Present a rational explanation of the situation and a way to solve it. Restate the issue with the client. Understanding the situation from their perspective can bring you closer to a solution. Clarify their wants and needs along with what you are capable of doing. If you cannot reach exact consensus, offer an alternative that values the client!

If the client is still angry regardless of your interventions, seek help! Three heads are better than one!

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Why People Bully...

You may think bullying was something done by kids and you're a working adult. So why are we talking about bullying? It is because workplace bullying is common and is one of the main reasons people leave their jobs. **What causes people to be a bully?**

They have poor management skills: Higher ups who get a position and don't really know what they are doing may resort to cruel behavior. They think that they must turn to bullying and use fear and intimidation as their "motivation weapon."

They suffer from low self-esteem: Bullies don't like who they are. They tend to shame others, to make themselves feel better about their own insecurities. They will look for vulnerable people who will take things personally to show their superiority.

Avoiding Groupthink

Organizations want to develop a culture where people are involved and engaged. However, if a company is too engulfed in developing a shared culture, they may develop "groupthink."

Groupthink occurs when an organization over-emphasizes harmony and makes irrational decisions just to keep things calm. An organization stuck in groupthink will disregard outside influences, assume the group has superior knowledge, and ignore any negative signs and feedback.

The best way to cure groupthink is to prevent its happening. Here's how!

1) **Protection for opposing views:** When groupthink occurs, anyone speaking against the group decision gets shot down. Make sure to let people voice dissenting opinions. This type of productive conflict can lead to greater and sounder ideas and decisions. Only after all ideas are encouraged, considered and vetted are decisions made.

2) **Have oversight and control:** It's important that there isn't one person with too much power. Create a system with checks and balances to make sure that multiple opinions are heard and new

They have internalized shame: Bullying is a coping mechanism for some. They may have had rough lives before entering the work force, and don't want to risk looking incompetent. Attacking people and putting them down is their way of coping with their own shame.

They desire power: Because they have never had a high position, they exert excess control. They enjoy making you feel bad using their verbal muscle.

They are jealous: Rather than embracing your successes, they attack others or put them down in order to feel better about themselves.

They aren't stopped: Employers need to establish and maintain a work environment that eliminates bullying. The absence of policies and the lacking of negative consequences actually encourages bullying. Remember: To ignore bullying is to affirm it!

ideas are considered.

3) **Avoid favorites:** As a leader, don't have a small group of "favorites" that you go to for information and advice. If overused, opinions and situations can become biased and real issues may not get addressed. In addition, this will divide the organization between the people who feel "in" and those who feel "out."

4) **Have ample time for decision making:** Often you know that a decision will need to be made. If so, don't put off the process. Start early. If an important decision has to be made quickly, the stress put on the group will lead people to just agree on a solution for the sake of having a decision rather than making the "right" decision.

5) **Change up decision making:** As an organization, make sure to change up the ways you make decisions. Sometimes use majority vote; sometimes have an open discussion; sometimes collaborate with people in various positions. This way decisions won't become an "automatic" process and people will feel they have an opportunity to contribute.

Having a shared culture is important. Avoiding Groupthink is even more important!

How to Be a Lifelong Learner

No matter our stage of life, learning new things is something we should and can do. In today's world, it is necessary not just to thrive...but to survive!!!

Learning helps us grow as individuals, whether it is expanding our views, values, or knowledge. Learning can be an ongoing journey or several one-time experiences. If you look around, there are always opportunities to grow and learn.

Here are quick tips on how to remain a lifelong learner:

1) **Try new things often:** Do something out of your comfort zone at least once a month. It can be something as simple as driving a new way to work or visiting a different restaurant. New experiences and insight will provide you with additional perspectives.

2) **Read!:** Reading has always been one of the easiest ways to learn something new. Today, there are thousands of journals and online forums covering any topic imaginable. Read about a new subject once a week.

3) **Surround yourself with people who**

are different from you: A life where every person agrees with you and shares the same viewpoint gets stagnant fast. Having different people around you can provide new viewpoints to develop you as an all-around person. You don't have to agree. You simply can listen and reflect!

4) **Always ask questions:** It's easy to sit back when you don't fully understand something and pretend that you do. Stop! Push yourself to ask questions. People will not see this as being stupid but rather they will see it as being interested. Once you understand another's perspective and/or learn the facts, you become better equipped to handle your own matters.

5) **Become involved:** Experiencing new communities or groups can help introduce you to new things. Book clubs, volunteer groups, or going to a public lecture at the local college can truly expand your horizons. You often don't have to spend money to do this.

Putting yourself in situations to learn sets you up for added knowledge. **Our brain is like any other muscle; it needs stimulation to stay healthy!**

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CC by Dr. Mimi Hull

THE corporate couch

**Dear Dr. Mimi:**

One of my supervisors is flirting and developing a relationship with one of my co-workers, and their behaviors are getting less and less professional. I don't want to be a Grinch, but company policy strictly prohibits intimate relations in the workplace. The supervisor is in a higher position than my co-worker, and it is also creating a situation of favoritism. Should I say anything?

—*Not a Grinch*

Dear Not a Grinch:

You are not a Grinch! Company policies are put in place to prevent situations that can jeopardize a person's position in the workplace. It would be wise to seek advice from your human resources person or one of your other supervisors. When you let them know what is going on, be specific about dates, times and behaviors.

—*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.

CC by Dr. Mimi Hull

THE corporate couch

**Dear Dr. Mimi:**

We have some potential big opportunities at work, and as the manager, I wanted to be inclusive so I asked for ideas from everyone. The problem is that some of their proposals clash with each other. Furthermore, we have a deadline, and some associates are taking too long to submit their ideas.

I want to be liked by my team, but trying to please everyone is so stressful. What should I do?

—*The Team Leader*

Dear Team Leader:

I'm happy that you value getting different perspectives. Give people a true deadline and then share the proposals (with no names attached) that you find acceptable. Have people give their input on these either at a meeting or in writing, and then make a decision. Let people know that if they don't share their ideas, they are giving up their right to complain later.

—*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.