

HULL &
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The Corporate Communicator

www.HullOnline.com May-June, 2012

hullonline.com

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improvement!



Conflict Management Tips

Be specific. "I'm never invited to meetings" is less effective than "I think I could have helped at the last meeting."

Don't involve yourself in conflicts that don't involve you or your job. If someone has been wronged, let them resolve the situation as they choose.

It's not all about you—You may think it's a personal attack, but maybe they are just having a bad day. Think BEFORE you respond to an insensitive remark. Saying nothing may be the best response.

Depersonalize conflicts. Instead of a "me versus you" mentality, use an "us versus the problem" approach.

Listen first. Before explaining your position, paraphrase and condense what the other said to see how much

you understand their position.

Wait to involve your boss. This shows that you are able to resolve difficulties.

Avoid character assassinations. "He missed last week's deadline" is OK; "He's a total idiot" is not.

Lastly, consider a mediator. A neutral third party or hiring a professional consultant is a must if the problem gets out of control, or if the issue is too emotional to resolve in a mutual discussion.



What Bosses Want!

Competence is important but bosses expect more. So what does your boss want?

Knowledge. Bosses need people who know more than the basics of their job. Develop a specific area of expertise that your boss values.

Inclusion. Bosses secretly fear that employees are screwing up and either not telling them or (even worse) aren't aware there's a problem. If your boss asks you a question about what's happening, answer directly. Make "keeping the boss in the loop" a priority.

Credibility. Do what you say you're going to do. If you want your boss' trust, your word has to carry weight.

Professionalism. Bosses appreciate individuals who are serious about what they do and work to achieve a deep

understanding of their job.

Integrity. A test of integrity is whether you'll take a stand, complete with facts, when it's unpopular. The boss has the final decision, but it's your job to make sure it's the right one.

Caring. Bosses value relationships with direct reports who care about them. Show that you're truly concerned by responding with solutions rather than excuses.

Visibility. Bosses are forgetful. Make sure yours knows just how valuable you are. Even if she assigned your work to you, in the crush of daily pressures, your contribution could easily get forgotten.

Clairvoyance. Deliver what the boss may need or want before he knows she wants it. Anticipate her needs and you will be seen as a leader and problem solver both!

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Train Your Board!

We have found that nonprofit board members are often passionate about the organization, but it takes more than passion to govern well. Board members must understand their role, their relationship to staff and leadership techniques. Training, especially when facilitated by an outside person, can help board members become acclimated to these multiple roles.

Individuals new to the nonprofit arena need to be taught the nuances of working with volunteer organizations. Veteran board members must continually train lest they get stuck in “but we’ve always done it that way.” All board members may need training in decision making, overcoming conflicts (especially personality conflicts), tactful persuasion and strategic planning. Board members must develop carefully refined leadership

skills to function properly in today’s changing environment. It is also important for them to work as a team so team building is crucial.

Training needs to include the roles and responsibilities of the board. We have found that it is crucial that the board as well as staff agree on what board members are expected to do (and not do!) for the organization to operate smoothly.

Training your Board is an investment that pays great dividends. What training will you schedule sooner than later???



Improving Communication

Imagine a basketball team. They have the best players, a successful coach, qualified management and state-of-the-art facilities. However, this team never wins. Why? More than likely, it’s due to fragmented communication between coaches, players and management.

This analogy illustrates that, even with superior resources, none of it matters if your team lacks communication. Here are five ways to improve communication at work.

Get to know your employees!

Having strictly formal relationships with your employees can be intimidating, patronizing and polarizing. Ask them for their feedback. Discover their strengths, aspirations and long-term goals. You can also ask them good-natured, simple questions about their life outside of work. The more “genuine” you are with them, the more genuine they will be with you.

Cut out the middle person.

Everyone played the game “telephone” as a child. Meanings tend to get lost in transition. Deliver messages directly, sincerely and clearly to in order to reduce confusion. Have an open-door

policy, especially during periods of change.

Hold office meetings!

Admittedly, meetings have a reputation for being boring. They don’t have to be! Meetings build good working relationships. As a manager, you determine if your meetings are a positive experience or a time waster. Remember: it’s not the instrument that makes a good melody; it’s the musician playing it!

Feedback, Feedback, Feedback.

Feedback shapes employee behavior and performance. Providing consistent, sincere and timely feedback is essential for maintaining a reliable means of communication within a workplace. Even if you cannot offer a raise, you can offer praise!

Stay the course

Create a strong mission, a clear vision and stay the course, so everyone can be on the same page. Deviating away from goals sends mixed messages to employees and causes confusion at all levels of the organization.

Successful communication isn’t built overnight. It is achieved through careful, consistent planning, training and hard work by everyone involved.

When to Give Feedback

We've given it, received it and possibly even hated it, but **constructive feedback** is essential for everyone in the workplace. It lets people know where they are and where to go next in terms of expectations and goals—yours, their own and the organizations.

The main objective of **feedback** is to provide guidance by supplying information that either supports effective behavior or guides someone back on track if they have veered off course. To do this, it is absolutely crucial to know not only how to give feedback but when.

Some clues that feedback is needed are when:

- Someone is new to their position.
- Someone is doing something new or different.
- Their probationary period is over.
- They haven't had a review in at least a year. (Although we typically suggest every six months.)
- Someone asks how they are doing.
- Someone has done a really great job.

- Unresolved issues persist.
- Mistakes happen again and again.
- An employee's performance doesn't meet expectations.
- They have work habits that disturb you.

Feedback can include:

- A simple thank you.
- Encouragement and support.
- Recognition and possibly, though not necessarily, a reward.
- Ways to improve.
- Another perspective.
- Following up on coaching discussions.
- Providing specific performance tips.
- Ongoing performance discussions.
- Letting someone know the consequences of their behavior (both positive and negative).



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FREE CONSULTATION

Have you ever said, "but I told them ..." You probably did, but the message you sent was not the message they received. Call Dr. Mimi to help improve communications!!!

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.

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

Contact her for a FREE consultation!

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by Dr. Mimi Hull



Dear Dr. Mimi:

I have an employee who has tattoos and piercings. When I hired him, the tattoos were covered and there was no metal in the piercings. Now, he periodically wears a nose ring, and last week, he came in with two rings in his eyebrows. When he wears short sleeves, the tattoos are visible. I mentioned something to my employee, and he said that since he is doing a good job, in today's world, tattoos and piercings should not matter and that he is simply expressing himself. I feel that they are inappropriate. Who is correct?

—*Traditional*

Dear Traditional:

Some employees mistakenly believe that they have a legal right to show tattoos and body piercings in the workplace. While tattoos and piercings may be examples of employee self-expression, they generally are not recognized as indications of religious or racial expression and, therefore, are not

protected under federal discrimination laws. Accordingly, as with most personal appearance and grooming standards, employers have wide latitude to set policy regarding tattoos and body piercings.

Some employers have policies limiting restrictions to employees who have contact with the public and only require that the tattoos and piercings not be visible. This policy is the most practical to implement since it does not restrict employees' personal choices to get tattoos or piercings, but simply limits when they can show them at work.

If you have a stated policy regarding visible tattoos and piercings, then you should enforce the policy, just as you enforce other employee behavior policies. As a first step, provide a warning that the employee has violated the policy and that further violations will result in additional discipline. If you do not have a policy in place, you may want to consider one.

—*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



Dear Dr. Mimi:

I've been working for the same company in the same position for almost five years. I've been hoping for a promotion for quite some time now, and I'm worried that promotion will never happen. I keep thinking that my boss will discuss my future with the company, but she never does. I do get good reviews, but that is the only feedback I receive. What can I do to make myself more attractive for promotion?

—*Going Nowhere*

Dear Going:

Talk to your boss. It never hurts to have a private conversation with the one directly responsible for your development within the company. Ask her for an evaluation, and discuss with her what you can do to make yourself a more attractive candidate for promotion.

Additionally, politely ask her if you may seek training in other areas of the organization so you can diversify your skills. The more you learn, the more you can potentially earn.

Keep an eye out for other job opportunities within the company, and be assertive in declaring your interest in such positions. If you truly feel that you are working at a dead-end job, then it may be in your best interests to seek employment elsewhere.

Don't turn your feeling of hopelessness into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Go out and get what you want!

—*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.