

Smart Strategies Solutions for Workplace Challenges

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Winter is winding down, but not done yet! I've started my indoor seedlings so Spring can't be far away!

This month we look at that now tired phrase: *"Do more with less"* and try to put a new spin on it - to do more with more! We'll also follow up on the quiz question from last month, discuss a tip for reducing stress and look at a few comments from some readers.

Hope you enjoy!



Alan Krieger

Feel free to forward this to friends and colleagues.

Do More with More or do less with less!

"Do more with less" has been kicking around since the recession in the late 80's... or longer. The only way to do more with less is to work longer, harder, and/or smarter ... which is really doing more with more (more hours, more effort, more brains).

"Do more with less" is a misnomer, so let's look at what you really can do:

1. "Do less with less" is the first strategy many agencies consider - "what can we cut?" This is a difficult, but often necessary approach to responding to reduced resources.
2. The second strategy is how can we do "more with more" in the face of shrinking resources?

There are two ways to get "more" resources with less



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Stress Management Tip

This is a stressful time for many people. The economy is tough, jobs are not secure and those with jobs are being pushed to do more with less! (see article to the left.) Newsweek has just come out with a cover story on stress.

money:

1. Increase the motivation of the team to collaborate and to do more work. **Work harder!**
2. Increase the effectiveness of the process (can be gained through process improvement strategies, increasing synergy through collaboration) **Work smarter!**

Neither of these is easy, but if you follow the principles of motivational leadership and team work, you can increase the effectiveness of your team. By bringing the team together in a positive way, you'll get lots of good ideas for ways to increase efficiency through improved processes.

Do not push for "work harder" if everyone is really doing their best already. Focus on "work smarter". In fact, never push people to work harder - they'll just push back. To get people to give 100% you need to inspire them, not drive them.

Motivational leadership is the job of the supervisor and it can also be a role each member of the team takes on. It's mandatory for supervisors, and optional for members. See the article below about a reader who wrote in and voluntarily took on this role to help her team do more with more. There are payoffs for all involved, so give it a try!

The keys to motivating people are to make them feel valued, respected, and appreciated. This isn't hard, if you take some time to view each person as an individual. Observe and/or ask them to find out what would make them happier at work? Respect is tricky (see story below on Decoding People) - people have different views about what is respectful behavior. Take time to listen to people and give them positive feedback. Set goals that are achievable with good team effort and recognize people as they achieve them and support them when they fall short.

People may be "self-motivated" for awhile, but especially in these challenging times, if we don't take action to keep people motivated, their performance will fall off. You have to invest to get success!

Let me know about your successes.
Email me at alan@krsol.com.

Readers Write In

Always happy to hear from you about challenges you're having or successes you've achieved. Two readers wrote in about the article on who's role is it - the employee or the supervisor?

(Headlined: "Stress Can Save Your Life"! Not so, when you read the fine print - stress does more harm than good.)

So it seems a good time to share stress management strategies.

One that I find helpful is to breathe! (The alternative is not helpful.) But breathing in this case is slow, intentional, focused breathing. It only takes 15-30 seconds and it really works!

Breathe in deeply and slowly using your abdomen to draw in air. Focus your attention on your breath coming in. You might try saying something relaxing to yourself as you breath in such as "calm" "peace" or "relax", or just count your breaths in and out.

Hold your breath a few seconds and then breathe out slowly, getting all the stale air expelled. Again as you breath out focus on your breath, say a calming word or simply count your breaths.

Stop and do this every time your feel stress building up and it will help you stay more balanced. You can do this walking down the hall, while staring at your computer screen, in the car when stopped at a red light... it really only takes 15-30 seconds to work. Taking 2-3 minutes is even better! (But not at a red light - will cause stress in others!)

Do it quietly, the intent is not to announce to everyone how stressed you are, but is to help you remove a bit of stress each time.

Let me know what strategies help you manage your stress.

One reader writes in that she had not gotten a desired promotion, but stepped up to the plate anyway and took on a leadership role (using strategies she picked up from the newsletter).

There was a new employee who was not doing well - poor performance and poor acceptance by the rest of the team. Our reader drew up a list of things the employee needed to learn and improve. She talked with him daily about these items and gave him regular feedback on his performance. She also helped him integrate more effectively with the team by giving him some tips about actions he could take to be more connected.

Results: The new employee is doing better, our reader feels good about her intervention, and the supervisor is now aware of her leadership skills and talents which could help with future promotional opportunities. A win-win-win!

Another reader wrote that she was frustrated by the lack of cooperation in her area and that her supervisor was not providing any real assistance. Instead of continuing to complain or wait for her supervisor to act, she addressed her supervisor calmly and presented the facts:

- what the problem was,
- what she felt needed to be done, and
- the solutions to date had not been sufficient.

It was a difficult situation, but by using assertive communication and conflict resolution skills it turned out well.

Congratulations to both readers on sharpening their people skills and putting them to good use!

Decoding People - Part II

Last month I presented a short scenario and asked you to choose which one felt right to you.

"Bob" who comes to work and gives a short hello and keeps his conversations "all business" or "Joe" who takes time to talk with people and connect with them on a more personal level?

One reader wrote in that he sees himself as both people. It depends on the person he is talking to. *"Some people are unpleasant and spend 15 minutes dumping and complaining, others, keep it short and sincerely thank you for your concern and feel better that you are interested enough to ask."*

Sometimes it can be tough being "Joe" - you get more than you bargained for! The key here is to remember that by

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taking the time to listen to the complainer you may create a bright spot in their day and help move them off their negativity. If they're someone who's stuck in negativity, then at some point, you should probably stop asking and suggest they get some assistance with their problems.

Sometimes people don't like Joe's approach. They don't want to talk to you. It's important to remember that there is no one best way to interact with people.

The "text book" answer is often Joe's approach - it is important to connect with people at work so you have some positive basis to work through any difficulties that come up.

However, not everyone is a "text book" case! Some people feel Joe is intrusive, a time waster and a distraction! Those people prefer Bob's short and "to the point" communication.

Notice the people you interact with daily and see which styles they prefer. Try to adapt your style to mesh with the style of the person you are talking with. You'll find that things go much more smoothly, conflict is reduced and teamwork goes up.

Email me if you'd like more information on these communication styles.

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