

Smart Strategies

Solutions for Workplace Challenges

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Dear Alan,

Last issue I mentioned an article I read that discussed how to engage employees. It was based on a book: First Break All the Rules. I found the book very thought provoking, and this issue I'm going to explore one of their premises that brought me up short: *"People don't change that much. Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out. Try to draw out what was left in."* I'd like to know what you think about this.

Also in this issue, we hear from a long time friend and reader, Fred Siegel from Phoenix, AZ who has put some of my suggestions into practice and reports on the results.

If you have any similar successes let me know and we can share them with our readers. If you have any serious challenges, let me know about them as well and maybe we can offer you some insights.

Hope you enjoy!



Alan Krieger

Feel free to forward this to friends and colleagues.

People Don't Change That Much

After thinking about this I found myself strongly agreeing with this insight. In my workshop on dealing with difficult people, most participants come to the session hoping to figure out how to make their difficult person an easy person to get along with. That's very difficult.

My focus is on first thinking about how you can change **the way you interact** with this person to make things work more smoothly (the Platinum Rule - if you're not familiar with this see the article at TEAM Model which addresses this).

The next strategy is to think about how you can



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There are 3 kinds of people in this world: those who can count, and those who can't.

Stephen Covey is one of those who can count. He identified **seven** habits of highly effective people.

Here's a version for those Difficult People we talked about earlier. Covey's list (in parentheses below) holds great wisdom and I try to draw on it daily. For some reason, difficult people seem to go with this second list, which doesn't really get them very far...

Seven Habits of Highly Dysfunctional People:

help the other person change their **behavior**, because you really can't change their personality.

The old saying "you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar" fits in here as well. By trying to draw out a person's strengths and talents you are more likely to develop a positive relationship with them than if you focus on correcting their weaknesses and deficits. This positive approach can lead to a "difficult person" becoming more positive and collaborative (caution - this is usually a slow process).

This is not to say that you can ignore poor performance. Another key message in the book and one I emphasize in my supervisory training programs is to focus on setting clear and specific performance outcomes that everyone in a specific position has to achieve. The individualization is how each person gets to the goal. This is where focusing on their strengths and assets is key. As you do this, you may find that some people do not have the skills needed for a particular job. Skills can be taught. However some people don't have the aptitude or personality for a particular job. According to the book, (they call this "talent"), this can not be taught. In this case the authors recommend that you help the person find a more appropriate job within or outside the company.

I find this a very helpful distinction between skills/knowledge which can be taught and aptitude/talent which is something you're born with or develop early in life and can't be easily changed.

This raises the old question - are leaders made or born? I think leaders are made (through training and experience), but each leader has to find the path that makes best use of his or her natural talents. Some lead by building strong relationships and having a team to support them; others lead by getting out in front and exhorting people to follow. Some lead with a vision, others with tactics and processes. The key is to find what works for the individual and go with that. As I say repeatedly in my seminars... there is no one right way to do anything when it comes to working with people. It all depends on their personality, style, strengths and values.

Leadership this way is difficult, but it's the only way to get to high performance.

What do you think? Email me at alan@krsol.com.

Thanks for listening - check out Fred's story below.

- (instead of: Be proactive...) *Be reactive*
- (instead of: Begin with the end in mind...) *Begin with your self interests in mind*
- (instead of: Put first things first....) *Put first things off*
- (instead of: Think win/win....) *If I'm going down, you're going with me*
- (instead of: Seek first to Understand....) *If I want your opinion, I'll ask for it*
- (instead of: Synergize....) *Vaporize the other*
- (instead of: Sharpen the saw...) *Sharpen the knife and drop a bomb*

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Strategies to Engage Employees and Build Stronger Teams

Submitted by Fred Siegel, Vocational Director

Gompers Habilitation Center, Phoenix, AZ

Taking some of your advice Alan, we did 2 easy things here at work... First, we involved several of the front line assembly workers in the hiring process. We gave them basic instructions about what questions were off limits (e.g. age, children, physical and medical conditions, etc.). We allowed them 10 minutes after we interviewed potential new employees to give our staff a chance to sit alone with the candidates who may become part of their team. We let them ask the applicant anything they want and talk privately. Our aim was to establish the sense that they are going to need to depend on the new hire. Therefore, they should make sure they recommend a person who they think will succeed once out on the floor. It seemed to not only boost morale but, increase productivity.

Second, our assembly floor layout and the way we were utilizing staff was getting stale and ineffective. There was too much complacency and very little accountability. We restructured the physical flow of the floor, overlapped staff to share duties and were again able to increase productivity as well as REDUCE the number of staff needed for the same functions, reducing our need for additional hiring.

We found that by overlapping staff and their responsibilities a strange thing happened... We closely observed several staff who in the past were a little lackluster in performance on their own. The staff we watched, seemed to do just enough but never more. Their paperwork just skated by and they never took on work not directly assigned to them.

Once we overlapped staff and created units that worked together and were viewed as such by management, it was as if the stronger staff helped the weaker ones work harder. The weaker staff were strongly encouraged and motivated by their peers to step up their performance. The stronger staff saw them as members of a team they were on and the group as a whole was being looked at. The staff themselves did more to increase the performance of the weaker ones than we as management had been able to. Peer pressure and group accountability succeeded where other methods failed.

If you have questions or feedback for Fred, you can email him at: fsiegel@GOMPERSCENTER.ORG

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for any comments
you send.**

Alan