

BALANCE

Volume 9, Issue 4

Differences of Opinion

Most managers are willing to listen to ideas offered by subordinates for trying new or different approaches. If you want to introduce a new idea to your manager, try these tips for having your ideas listened to and potentially accepted:

- 1) Ask for permission for introducing a new or differing idea (e.g., “May I offer an idea for doing this differently?”). This is a negotiating skill that few employees master. It’s not a demonstration of lack of assertiveness. It promotes interest by the listener, which is the pathway to acceptance.
- 2) Present your idea by sharing your thoughts and line of thinking and then present the conclusion or different approach, option, or way of solving the problem you believe is worth considering. Ask for your manager’s reaction to your idea or suggestion.
- 3) Since your goal is acceptance of the idea or a better way of doing something, avoid treating your manager like an opponent or abruptly launching into a declaration of your disagreement.
- 4) If your manager disagrees with your idea, ask yourself if there a clear rationale? Consider all aspects of the situation and ask your manager for further explanation if you still do not understand.

This approach to offering new ideas emphasizes your desire for an effective relationship with your manager and makes for a winning approach.

The Hazard of Inactivity

Are you getting 30 minutes of exercise daily but spending 18 hours sitting—at a computer, behind the wheel of a car, or in front of the TV? If so, health guidelines view you as a “physically active person,” but maybe this is not such a good description. This sedentary lifestyle increases the risk of gaining weight and can lead to cardio-metabolic health risks. In fact, as many as 50 million Americans are living sedentary lives, putting them at increased risk of health problems and early death, says the American Psychological Association. In a long-term study of more than 40,000 adults, 16 percent of deaths were directly related to sedentary living. This percentage did not include deaths complicated by other illnesses such as obesity, smoking, high cholesterol, or diabetes. Plain and simple, a lack of exercise was the culprit. This was after researchers had controlled for Body Mass Index, smoking, family history of breast cancer, and other possible risks. Can you engineer more physical activity into your job? If you’re feeling a bit guilty about not getting more exercise, grab opportunities that pop up during the day to get more physical activity. They are probably more plentiful than you think. Walk farther to your car, take the stairs, straighten up your office, walk a bit farther to a different coffee shop or walk to the next office to consult on a problem rather than using e-mail or instant messaging.



Internet Seniors May Have the Edge

Could time on the computer be a good thing for helping improve cognitive agility and maintenance of brain functioning? UCLA researchers conducted MRI tests on middle-age and older adults (some with Web surfing experience and some without) while having them explore the Internet. The experienced Web surfers showed markedly more brain neural network activity, suggesting that Web surfing, like other activities such as crossword puzzles and mental teasers, might help preserve brain function. Source: UCLA Newsroom; search www.newsroom.ucla.edu (“Internet and brain functioning”).

Teaching Teens about Debt

Help your children to grow up to be savvy about the hazards of debt and credit. Consider starting with keeping track of pocket change and learning lessons of managing a savings account. Be cautious, however, if you decide to co-endorse a debit or credit card. There is an explosion in teen-created debt, and only 26 percent of teens know how finance charges on credit cards work. Internet vendors are aware of this fact, making the teen market a key target for them. Note: Most teens still can't pass the National Financial Literacy Challenge, a 35-question financial competence exam offered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury at the recommendation of the President's Advisory Council on Financial Literacy. The average score for 2008 was only 48 percent, the lowest in its 10-year history.

Time to Talk to the EAP

EAPs help employees with personal problems that may affect job performance. But what if you don't have a personal problem and just want to talk confidentially about what's going on in the office—worries about workplace trends, internal politics, and related frustrations—or perhaps a work idea that you want to bounce off of a good listener? Is it appropriate to call the EAP? Can these discussions also be confidential? Answer: Yes.

Spousal Abuse Prevention

When you hear the term “spousal abuse,” do you think of a passive, physically abused, and tormented person in a low-income household, living with an alcoholic? This is one common stereotype, but spousal abuse occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, and financial levels. Research shows that both men and women can be abuse victims, but women are more commonly reported as victims. “Not wanting to get involved” or seeing spousal abuse as “other people's business” are common reactions of those who suspect abuse. An important step in prevention is dispelling stereotypes; but another step is recognizing subtle signs that can lead to earlier interventions. You are not as likely to see overt signs of abuse such as black eyes, cuts, or a disheveled appearance in the victim. Instead, you may hear about the victim's fear, avoidance of topics that anger the abuser, evidence that the abuser controls access to friends or family, or statements by the victim that he or she can't do anything right. These may be strong indicators of abuse. Ask about abuse and encourage a friend to get help when you see these indicators. If these problems are part of your own spousal relationship, you should understand that long-term coping can make it harder for you to take action, because victimization can include the false belief that you deserve the treatment you're getting.

Missing Piece of Your Great Idea?

Have you ever had a great idea for solving a problem or doing something a better way at work, and found that nobody listened? Lots of employees have had this experience. It's frustrating, but here's the angle you might be missing: The biggest barrier to innovation in the business world is not a lack of great ideas or even, in most cases, a lack of corporate will to implement them. The missing link is an execution plan. Flesh out the A to Z of how a great idea can be implemented, pass it through rigorous scrutiny, and then present it. There's no guarantee, but this may be a more likely path for acceptance of your idea.

Too Invested in Conflict?

Everyone thinks resolving conflict is a good idea, but for some, conflict can be difficult to give up. Do you regret and despise conflict, but recognize at times that you feel gratified by it as a way to feel heard, understood, or simply “right”? Is conflict a way for you to feel recognized, protected, and more assured that you are not going to be dominated or controlled by someone? If so, you may be too invested in conflict. When we don't let go of conflict, it can undermine our effectiveness and keep us from building the effective relationships we want at work. If you experience frequent conflict in relationships, take a closer look at the role conflict plays in your life. Consider getting assistance from your EAP.

Eldercare and Accidental Neglect

Have a plan to manage your stress and get periodic relief from the responsibilities of taking care of an elderly loved one. Accumulated stress (if you lack a relief plan) increases the risk that you may postpone care, overlook medication needs, fail to check in to see how things are going, or dismiss safety concerns in the home. This can happen to the most well-meaning family members. A common form of neglect includes isolation, lack of attention, and deprivation of companionship or social contact. Plan ahead so you don't experience burnout and place your loved one at risk.

Measuring Up

If you are concerned that you may not be measuring up to the expectations of your position, what should you do? Remaining in denial and hoping no one notices may be the worst move. Instead, get feedback from your manager. Direct communication is almost always the better road to travel because it engages management in helping you to resolve problems. Silence puts the problem in management's lap, and you risk a more unpredictable and uncontrollable outcome.

Getting Along at Work

Getting along with coworkers is a lot like dealing with family. There are bound to be occasional squabbles, flare-ups, and coworkers who remind you of relatives that you may have issues with. Certainly, you don't always have to love each other, but the truth is that you are obligated to get along at work. One powerful strategy for doing so is improving your “other-awareness” skills. Unlike the more familiar self-awareness, other-awareness is the degree to which you are tuned in to the environment and what others are feeling or needing. Simply asking is the fastest route to finding out, but the real world doesn't always work that way. You can't be a mind reader, of course, but you can practice reading the signals. Is your coworker tired, frustrated, rushed, or experiencing anxiety? Is he or she avoidant and non-talkative, in need of space and privacy? This social skill takes practice, but the degree to which we possess it enables us to build better relationships. Ask yourself, “How are my other-awareness skills?” If you could use some skill building, take a day to notice the signals others send without spoken words.

Compulsive Buying Can Be Beat

Do you find shopping at the mall fun? Many people do. But do you find shopping and spending intensely exciting, and have you linked this activity to feelings of happiness or empowerment? Do you use shopping to change or improve your mood? These feelings can be so strong that a compulsive pattern can emerge for some people. Compulsive buying, an addiction-like behavior, is followed by feelings of anxiety, guilt, and stressful behavior, such as hiding purchases. Don't put off getting help, if this sounds familiar. Stopping compulsive buying is not simply a willpower exercise. Don't let denial and embarrassment stand in your way of getting help. Contact your EAP or health care provider to learn more.



Are Your Headaches Masking Anger?

According to psychology researcher and migraine treatment expert Robert Nicholson, Ph.D., anger is more responsible for people's headaches than anxiety is. Anxiety, smells, and allergies are headache triggers, too, but anger management may be one of the least suggested treatment approaches for those who suffer from chronic headaches. Those who suppress anger may find new hope by examining their anger management skills. Admitting to an anger management issue is not an easy thing to do. If you suffer from chronic headaches, consider examining your anger management style more closely. Your employee assistance professional or health care provider can provide an assessment or refer you to one.

Swine Flu Facts

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has established a Web site (www.flu.gov) as the one-stop source for almost anything you can think of regarding the H1N1 influenza virus (swine flu). The Web site has news updates daily, and sometimes hourly, that can help you or your community better protect yourself and respond to a flu pandemic. Included are answers to dozens of common and not-so-common questions; facts and figures; reported cases and deaths; state-by-state information; action steps to prevent the spread of the virus in schools, workplaces, and households; and much more. Flu fact: Those most vulnerable to H1N1 are younger people, pregnant women, health care personnel, and people who have underlying health conditions. Source: www.flu.gov.

To speak with an EAP professional,
please call: **800.999.1077**

