PEOPLE: THE JOB WOULD BE GREAT EXCEPT FOR THE PEOPLE!

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Thorny personnel issues in the workplace, we all have them; what do we do about them?

- What problems/behaviors/issues have you seen?
  - Attendance
  - “Do gooder”
  - Civility
  - Information sharing
  - Negativity
  - Conflict
Let’s start with what *not* to do

- Ignore
- Transfer the problem to another department
- Reorganize the department/institution
- Assign blame
Conflict is a natural consequence of teamwork.

Healthy:
- Challenge the status quo
- Debate on how to better serve customer

Unhealthy:
- Conflict that stems from people challenging each other
Tips to reduce interpersonal conflict:

- Focus on facts and information not rumors and feelings
- Use I messages; “you” makes people defensive
- Choose your words carefully
- Involve the people in the changes/discussion
- Begin conversations positively
- Listen to understand, not to rebut
- Challenge yourself to think of how the idea could work, rather than why it won’t
- Keep communication open and objective, reduce hostility
- Deal with the problems difficult to discuss—acknowledge
- Focus on the issue not the person; be specific
- Be respectful
- Avoid judgmental language
Tips to reduce interpersonal conflict:

- Keep it simple
- Don’t just tell people *what*; tell them *why*
- Manage your emotions
- Be conscious of your own communication style
- Be a keen observer
- Be realistic, focus on factors that the person can control
- Set expectations
- Hold people accountable
- Hold yourself accountable

- Develop an action plan
  - realistic goals;
  - clear priorities;
  - identify potential obstacles and brainstorm potential solutions;
  - determine what additional support, coaching or training might be needed.

- Follow-up
Crucial Conversations are generally high stakes and emotional and involve disagreement.

- Crucial Confrontations are about disappointments generally made up of:
  - Failed promises
  - Missed expectations
  - All other bad behavior
  - Why didn’t you do what you were supposed to do?
To confront:
  to hold someone accountable, face to face.

- If handled correctly open honest conversation held in a respectful way.
- Result: problems solved; better relationships
- Need to do the following:
  - Master your emotions
  - WHAT & IF
    - Clarify the issue. Stop and ask yourself what are the consequences of the problem.
Tips from others:

- **CPR**
  1. **Content**—discuss what happened - the “incident”
  2. **Pattern**—the *next* time the problem occurs, talk about the pattern
  3. **Relationship**—as part of the discussion, talk about the relationship---what’s happening as a result of the problem; loss of trust; lack of confidence; impact on others or how they are treated.
Strategies:

1) Facilitate a meeting with those having the conflict.
   When I do this, typically I have talked with both parties individually and heard *both* sides of the story....why they don’t get along and then convene a meeting with both of them. Develop facilitation skills, study up on facilitation if that is not your strength.

2) Make sure you have clarity about the problem, and how that impacts the workplace.

3) Remain calm. Don’t address the issue when you are upset about it....walk away, reflect, then move down the path of taking action.

4) Practice the conversation; know the key points you want to make. Use neutral language.

5) Talk to a trusted source, get a reality check---perhaps *you* are over reacting, or perhaps not.
Lots of literature available; my bookshelf contains:

- The Manager’s Tool Kit, Practical Tips for Tackling 100 on-the-Job Problems, Cy Charney, American Management Association 1995
- People Styles at Work, Making Bad Relationships Good and Good Relationships Better, Robert Bolton and Dorothy Grover Bolton; American Management Association 1996
- Crucial Conversations, Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High; Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, McGraw-Hill
- Crucial Confrontations, Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior; Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, McGraw-Hill; 2005
Questions & Answers

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