A WORD FROM GLORIA

Greetings everybody,

As the year moves on at its usually hectic pace, I recommend you take a moment to reflect on people in your workplace.

For many of you, the team is made up of the usual range of motivated and hard working people, to some who are less so. For others – there seems to be an overflow of difficult people. Some Leaders choose to ignore this and carry on regardless, but what is becoming more apparent is the actual cost in terms of productivity and attrition rates of allowing these 'difficult' people to go unchecked. Were you aware that on average, Team Leaders spend up to 25% of their time dealing with misunderstandings, personality conflicts and controversy?

What is happening in your place of work, and what have you done to address this?

The newsletter this month focuses on Managing Difficult People, and contains some useful insights into working with this particular group.

At the very least it will reinforce what you already do, or it will resource you to approach this differently. Either way, I encourage you to read it.

Happy reading

Gloria Masters - Managing Director

IN THIS ISSUE

Latest Article - Working with Difficult People

Underpinning any major difficulty at work is usually a 'people issue' - whether it stems from stress, poor communication, low morale or underperformance. What makes it particularly challenging is when there is a 'difficult' team member involved. There are many reasons why someone is difficult, and once they are perceived this way it is hard to view them any other way. However, people do not

'intend' to be difficult, and part of being an emotional intelligent and effective leader is to try to understand the reasons behind this, and ultimately work with it competently.

Managing Difficult People Workshop

This workshop provides participants the skills to recognise the key behaviours that difficult people exhibit. It then resources them with the specific tools to combat that behaviour – ranging from providing damage control to managing the issue so it doesn't escalate. Beginning with an analytical self-assessment of how they usually cope, participants then begin the experiential part of the workshop. The focus of the workshop is to build skills and confidence so that each person leaves with clarity around the specific nature of the difficult behaviours they recognise, assess and deal with on a daily basis. It provides resources to minimise the impact difficult clients have. A 'difficult behaviour' tool-kit with practical and easy solutions is introduced. The workshop culminates in an individualised action plan for participants to work on immediately following the workshop, in order to reinforce new skills and understandings gained.

Competition

This month's competition involves you emailing us at info@mastersofcommunication.co.nz, and listing the amount of people you would consider 'difficult' in the workplace. All entries must be in by Monday 30 April. All correct entries will go into a draw for a meeting with Gloria, on ways to cope with Managing difficult people at work. This will be held in May 2012.

The winner will be notified on Tuesday 1 May.

MANAGING DIFFICULT PEOPLE

On average, Team Leaders spend up to 25% of their time dealing with misunderstandings, personality conflicts and controversy.

Underpinning any major difficulty at work is usually a 'people issue' - whether it stems from stress, poor communication, low morale or underperformance. What makes it particularly challenging is when there is a 'difficult' team member involved.

There are many reasons why someone is difficult, and once they behave in this way it is hard to view them otherwise. However, people do not 'intend' to be difficult, and part of being an emotional intelligent and effective leader is to try to understand the reasons behind this, and ultimately work with it competently.

There are many explanations as to why some people are so difficult to deal with, but lets look at some work related ones.

- An excessive workload – Sometimes people just feel overwhelmed with all the work they are required to complete.
- Concerns about Management's ability to lead the company forward successfully, in this economy.
- Anxiety about the future, particularly ongoing work, income and retirement security.
- Lack of challenge in their work, with boredom intensifying existing frustrations.
- Insufficient recognition for the level of contribution and effort provided, and concerns that pay isn't commensurate with performance.

These examples underpin the need to invest in your team and their ability to work well together. But what if you are doing that - and still find that day after day a particular team member is really difficult to work with, and the whole team has had enough?

Try the following strategies:

1.   Listen to them without being defensive. This won't be easy when you feel they need disciplining, but if your words are congruent with your voice and body language, they will feel you are genuine. Being focused on their point of view will help eradicate some of the hostility they may be feeling.

2.   Understand their point of view and reflect it back to them. The emphasis being – you really 'get' what they are trying to say. By reflecting what you heard, you also acknowledge how closely you were listening.

3.   Precisely explain your concerns, so they understand your viewpoint without feeling

blamed or minimised. The way to do this is to preface statements with **I** not **you**. E.g., I'd like to explain my perspective to you.

4.   Take the time to problem solve together. If you take the time to be familiar with each other's view point you are more likely to have a workable resolution, rather than a rushed and misunderstood one.

You may also need to help the person take responsibility. Ultimately it is their duty to change their negative behaviour and attitude at work. Try addressing this one on one to show concern for their problem, and respect for their privacy.

Another technique to try is to substitute negative reactions with more appropriate ones. You may need to specify exactly what will help. E.g., telling them that the team aren't seeing their skills - they only hear the angry voice.

If you find the problem is getting worse it may be wise to call in another Manager, or even an external workplace consultant who specialises in communication and mentoring issues.

As a Manager engaging in the following will also help:

1.   **Behave in a Predictable Manner**
     To diminish tension, be very open and transparent in your dealings with and expectations of them. Announce your plan of action and stick to it.

2.   **Put some focus on your own actions**
     Any finger pointing will only exacerbate tension and blaming. Operate with integrity…'I'm going to hear you out before I speak…'

3.   **Do not rehash the past**
     Point scoring by reminding them of how they're always like this tends to create more negative reactions. Try to react with expectations of positive behaviour. For instance 'I'm sure that the team will deliver on time, now that you and I have talked…'

4.   **Good things take time**
     Expect the change to take a little time. After all, the negative way of functioning has probably been around for years. It might take more than two days for you to see changes for the better.
     Comment on any positive changes you see – no matter how little. If you see an effort being made – acknowledge it.

5.   **Follow Up**
     So often a situation is left to 'sit' and fester. This won't work here. Be prepared to walk the walk and follow up when you say you will. If the situation is seriously affecting morale, you need to plan another meeting in 7 days time.

If you try all of the above, and there is still no noticeable difference in their behaviour or attitude, it may be time to engage HR and proceed with issuing verbal then written warnings.

And finally, people can only change themselves if they have the courage to see themselves as they really are, and ultimately believe they need to change. You cannot do it for them!

For more on this topic and some further ideas to address this issue - see the Workshop Outlines and Resources we provide, listed below.

For the individuals exhibiting Difficult Behaviour at Work:

Workshops

Emotional Intelligence

Attitude at Work

Communication Skills in the Workplace

For the Managers leading 'Difficult' Team Members - Workshops

Managing Difficult People at Work

Emotional Intelligence

Leadership and Communication

Consultations

Consulting Session (Groups of Managers/Leaders) dealing with specific individualised issues concerning 'Difficult' Team Members

Consulting Session (one on one) with Managers/Leaders targeting specific concerns regarding 'Difficult' Team Members

Please contact us if you would like information on any of the above

By Gloria Masters
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MANAGING DIFFICULT PEOPLE WORKSHOP

Course Overview

This workshop provides participants the skills to recognise the key behaviours that difficult people exhibit. It then resources them with the specific tools to combat that behaviour – ranging from providing damage control to managing the issue so it doesn't escalate. Beginning with an analytical self-assessment of how they usually cope, participants then begin the experiential part of the workshop.

The focus of the workshop is to build skills and confidence so that each person leaves with clarity around the specific nature of the difficult behaviours they recognise, assess and deal with on a daily basis. It provides resources to minimise the impact difficult clients have. A 'difficult behaviour' tool-kit with practical and easy solutions is introduced. The workshop culminates in an individualised action plan for participants to work on immediately following the workshop, in order to reinforce new skills and understandings gained.

Course Topics

- 10 common areas of difficulty
- Tools to use when escalation occurs.
- Keys to manage awareness
- Techniques to move difficulty forward
- Communication Gold Stars:
- Listen
- Reflect
- Negotiate
- 4 Personality Types
- Techniques to shift attitudes
- `Ways to remain 'intact'
- Strategies for excellence
- Tool kit
- Action Plan