The trend of obstacles to becoming an extraordinary team seems to be a re-occurring area of research and debate here on the Extraordinary Team newsletter. Fortunately, this month's tips can provide some guidance on how to overcome them. Hopefully, you can soak up these last days of summer and return to work refreshed and focused.

Kristin

P.S. As you may be aware, the European Union recently put into effect a new data protection law called the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Since you have subscribed to my newsletter, I want to assure you that your privacy and security of your data is a high priority. Check out our new privacy policy and other legal information here.

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

USE "ESCALATING INTERVENTIONS" TO INTERVENE GRACEFULLY AT YOUR NEXT MEETING

For the most part, people who are being disruptive in a meeting don't realize the impact they are having on the team; they are just being themselves. The key to handling these situations is to intervene gracefully while maintaining the self-esteem of the disrupter.

The best way to intervene is to prevent the problem from happening in the first place. But preventions alone won't keep all your problems from surfacing.

An intervention is any action or set of actions, deliberately taken to improve the functioning of an individual group or organization. As supervisors, most of us are familiar with resolving the problem "off-line" or to the side. While this strategy is effective in a boss/subordinate relationship, it is not an effective *team* intervention strategy.

As a team leader, facilitator or team member, observe:

- Team dynamics
- Areas of agreement
- What isn't working

You must intervene when a team member is doing something that concretely and tangibly affects the team. A change in behavior is *required* for the team to progress.

You can intervene when you feel that your contribution would be helpful to the

person/team. However, you must have a strong enough relationship with the other person/team to have a reasonable chance of being heard.

Some general ground rules for interventions:

- Prevent the problem using prevention strategies.
- Maintain the self-esteem of the other person.
- Involve the team in the solution, reflecting your observations.
- Reach agreement on how to move forward.
- Confirm agreement to avoid further disruption.
- Resolve the problem to the extent necessary to resume.
- Allow the team to gracefully let go of the undesirable behavior.
- In the face of resistance, shift to active listening.

When you feel the conversation starts to stray, I suggest you use a process I call "escalating interventions." You'll want to be firm, polite and fair because you often don't have a whole lot of time and want to keep the conversation moving briskly. So start with the lowest level intervention appropriate to the situation. If that doesn't modify the disruptive behavior, then kick it up a notch to the next level intervention.

Do Nothing.

You always have the option to do nothing and see if the situation resolves itself. However, if you let one person run over, you penalize everyone else.

Eye Contact.

Shoot 'em a glance when they have been dominating the conversation, making inappropriate or irrelevant comments, or whatever else seems to be disrupting the flow of the team's work. Confidently check your watch and glance at the person.

Movement.

Make some kind of movement toward the disrupter. Raise your hand, lean forward, move toward them, show a cue card, tap your pencil, etc.

Redirect the Conversation.

- Turn the disrupter's comments into a constructive contribution to the team's discussion.
- Define or clarify the terms being used.
- Change up the question.
- Restate or reframe the question and direct it to another team member.
- Rephrase the statement into something more relevant.
- Condense the speaker's answer when it is too lengthy or ask the disrupter to summarize or "headline" their position.
- Call on someone in the meeting whom you know has similar issues and ask if what was just said vibes with them.
- Gently interrupt and assure them that you can return to discussing X later in the meeting if there is enough time.
- Interject at the end of a sentence or while the speaker is taking a breath.
- Ask for one conversation at a time when team members are talking over each other.
- Separate the issues out.
- Suggest a new viewpoint or angle on the situation.
- Transition to the next topic when the topic has been covered enough.
- Put it in the "parking lot" to address the issue at the end of the meeting.

Remind Them.

- Refocus on the topic.
- Reinforce the ground rules.
- Reinforce/clarify the process.
- Restate the time allocated for the comment.

- Reinforce a key point.
- Recognize constructive behavior.
- Announce the time remaining for the meeting.
- Some teams have a verbal/audible "cue" that reminds people to stay on track e.g. three knocks on the table, or throw a Koosh ball at the disrupter!

Confront the Disrupter.

This is the highest level of intervention, and you should only have to resort to this level if you have a jerk in your meeting.

- Do a "process check."
- Ask for a moment of silence to reflect on what has been happening.
- Appeal to the disrupter.
- Cut off the speaker.
- Discuss potential paths forward.
- Mediate the conflict.
- Disengage. Take a break.
- Call in a third party/team sponsor.

In my experience, you will rarely climb to a confrontation, as long as you place prevention strategies in place and escalate your interventions appropriately during your team meeting.

IT'S NOT THE CELL PHONE! SHOULD SOCIAL MEDIA BE BANNED AT WORK?
By Joseph Sherren

Last week, while facilitating a group of executives at the Chief Executive Network, the discussion turned to allowing employees to carry mobile devices in the workplace. There was great disparity in beliefs, policies, and practices that have been implemented in the various companies.

On one side, some said that cell phones are absolutely banned. Some business owners insist they be turned off. On the other side, some executives said it is an employee's right to have a lifeline to the outside world, their families, and any urgent situation they may be dealing with.

A few organizations had designated cell phone areas or restricted their use to the cafeteria or some other common area. But, does that respect the requirements of your employees as well as comply with the needs of your organization? Others laid out a very strict policy on appropriate use.

Has the banning of cell phones and social media gone too far, and is it sustainable for the future? We live in a connected world dominated by mobile communications and digital interactions. It will soon be impossible to avoid personal device use in the workplace, at least not without causing serious morale issues or trust issues between management and employees.

According to a 2016 Statistics Canada survey, over 76 percent of Canadians owned a smartphone. Breaking it down even further, 94 percent of 15 to 34-year-olds surveyed reported owning one. So it is not unreasonable to assume that in the future, almost 100% of your workers will own a mobile device.

In the USA, over 90% of all Americans have cell phones. This percentage increases if you only consider working professionals, and contrary to belief, the use of personal devices does not stop when the workday begins. Organizations need to figure out how to accommodate a more flexible position in this age of technology.

What will make it even more difficult is the technical advances that are continually

invading mobile communications. How will you control cell phone use when it is integrated in a person's glasses, incorporated in their watch, or embedded in their skin in the form of a microchip? By the way, these technologies already exist!

What managers need to understand is that the problem is not the cell phone. Personal device use in the workplace is an issue of performance. If there is an abuse of use, it is a behavioral matter, not a cell phone or social media issue. If employees are still producing great results, what's the big deal?

Managers need to handle personal device use on a case-by-case basis. This means identifying poor producers who are also frequently on their devices, and making the conversation about performance, not the cell phone.

When working with clients I advise them not to ban cell phones or social media, rather coach employees on appropriate and respectful use and how they might make social media work for the organization. Two examples are:

- I worked with a hospital client who banned social media use. A surgeon, however, disobeyed the policy and used a social media site during an operation to obtain information that ultimately saved a woman's life.
- A car dealer forbade any employee to be on social media during working hours. However, on a day when snowstorms closed businesses and schools, one sales representative (with the boss's permission) broke the rule and tweeted that she was not busy, and on this day only, the dealer would sell 4×4's for the lowest prices ever offered. But, the deal had to be made that day only. She sold a half-dozen SUV's!

My question for managers: Do you have a policy regarding cell phone usage that respects the needs of all stakeholders?

PANEL MODERATORS: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR PANELISTS HATE EACH OTHER

I've talked about the importance of picking "DEEP" panelists – Diverse, Experienced, Eloquent, and Prepared. But what happens if those panelists don't get along?

I was talking to a meeting professional who confessed, "I pick panelists who hate each other!"

That could be a problem for you and the panel moderator, and quite lively and interesting for the audience!

Do Your Research. Once you find out they truly "hate each other" – dig a little deeper on this as part of your research. Is it a personality conflict? Some kind of historical bad blood between them? Or could it be professional differences of opinion? From your research, discern what will help and what will hinder your panel discussion. For example, you can easily leverage differences of opinions during the discussion – and probably want to stay away from bad blood issues!

Play with the Format. If you know that the panelists disagree, why not create a debate-style format where the panelists can disagree with each other in a more formal, yet non-threatening way? The audience will love the cross-fire type of format!

Watch the Dynamic. Watch the behaviors and dynamics of the panelists during the pre-event call (if you have one) and in your final meet-up before you go on stage. I have seen panelists who venomously dislike each other put on a game face and play nice. And I have also seen panelists who bring out their fangs on stage. You just never know. So watch the dynamic closely so you are not caught completely off-guard.

Sit Apart. Consider having the panelists in assigned seats – as far apart from each other as possible. You don't need to fan the fires by putting them next to each other!

Establish Ground Rules. I always give my panelists a few "ground rules" to keep in mind: Keep it conversational, all participate…no one dominate, and be additive not

repetitive. If I know there is some bad blood between panelists, I'll add, "Let's generate light around the issue and not heat." And if you are really worried, you may want to be even more direct: "Let's put our differences aside, and let's have an amazing conversation with each other on behalf of the audience."

Don't Be Surprised. Come prepared to intervene if the blood starts to boil! Have some quick sentence starters to shift the conversation:

- That's an interesting point. Let's see what our other panelists have to say.
- Wow! There's a lot of passion around this topic. Let's see what questions the audience has about this topic.
- So it sounds like there is a fundamental disagreement on this topic. Is there another perspective/course of action we haven't considered?

Put an End to It. If things get completely out of hand (I haven't seen that happen often, but it has been known to happen), call it. State what you specifically notice about the situation and request to stop that discussion thread. Then start a new discussion. For example: "We don't need to shout and talk over each other. Obviously, there is a tremendous amount of passion and conflicting views about this topic. How about we agree to disagree on this point and move on?"

It is not unheard of for panelists to hate each other – so be prepared to handle the situation with grace and aplomb when it does happen during a panel discussion!

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: WHAT EXCEPTIONAL EXECUTIVES NEED TO KNOW

The strength of the team is directly related to the ability of the team leader to coach the individuals on that team to be the best they can be AND to work together. Sounds simple enough, but not easy to do....unless you read Elizabeth Jeffries' latest book, What Exceptional Executives Need To Know.

In a clear and straightforward way, Jeffries gives you a roadmap from the very first conversation you have to the final "Congratulations! Well done!" She clarifies the principles of coaching and the skills and tools required to achieve an extraordinary outcome.

Anyone who wants to coach their teams to greatness - new team leader or a seasoned vet - needs to read this primer. It solidifies the things you know to be true, reminds you of the things you used to do, and gives you great inspiration for what you can do moving forward.