

Volume 1, Issue 6

March 2008

Special points of interest:

- The next session of the Leadership Institute will be held on March 28, 2008, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Old Main Village.
- In preparation for our next session, please read the article, "The Two Self-Defeating Habits of Otherwise Brilliant People," which will be emailed to you as a PDF.

Inside this issue:

Reducing Workplace Conflict and Stress

Anna Maravelas

If the Boss has a problem, maybe You do, too.

Matt Villano

The Contagiousness of "Bad Apples"

Adapted from an article by Kathy Gurchiek

Day 6: Reducing Workplace Conflict and Stress



The next session of the Leadership Institute will focus on how to reduce stress and conflict in our workplaces. We are excited and honored to introduce Anna Maravelas, who will be our facilitator for the day.

Anna is the author of "How to Reduce Workplace Conflict and Stress," and is also the founding president of Thera Rising, Inc. in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her strategies for reducing stress and conflict have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, *The American Bar Association Journal*, *Harvard Management Update*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *Franchise Times*, *Healthcare Risk Management*, *The American Management Association Journal*, *Training Magazine*, and *Continental Air*.

Anna has a graduate degree in psychology, with additional training in systems thinking and process mapping. She also studied conflict resolution at Harvard Law School's

Negotiation Project.

Anna's unique insights, humor and warmth result in a delightful ability to convey profound insights in an entertaining and moving manner. Audiences are "captivated by her wisdom and charm."

Throughout the course of our next session, Anna will present four modules, each with a different focus. As we progress through each of the modules, we will learn how to deal with existing conflict, reduce future conflict, build our individual and team resiliency, and develop an atmosphere of open communication and trust.

If the Boss has a problem, maybe You do, too. By Matt Villano of the New York Times

Q: *Your boss has begun to display a pattern of irrational behavior, and it is putting a strain on people in the office. What should you do?*

A: A shift in your boss's ordinary workplace behavior should arouse concern, said Gerald M. Groe, an organizational psychologist and professional development consultant in Parrish, Fla. "Just because your boss is the boss doesn't mean he is impervious to stress and suffering," said Mr. Groe, who has served as a human resources executive at both the American Express and Cigna.

Q: *Which types of behavior are causes for alarm?*

A: There's no formula for assessing

irrational behavior. "If you've worked for your boss for a while, you probably know what types of actions would seem odd," said John Baldoni, a management consultant in Ann Arbor, Mich. He said that unprovoked tirades by the boss could be just as suggestive of trouble as his disappearing for days at a time.

Q: *Is it a good idea to discuss concerns about the boss with your colleagues?*

A: Pamela J. Holland, chief operating officer of Brody Communications, a leadership training firm in Philadelphia, says that as long as you are careful not to say anything that may be regarded

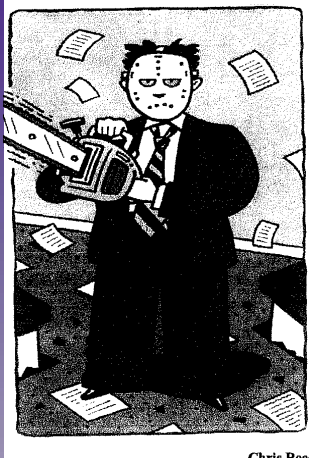
as undercutting your boss, sharing your concerns with co-workers may be helpful. "Talking about the situation with colleagues might help you realize that perhaps the boss's behavior is indicative of a much larger problem," said Ms. Holland, author of "Help! Was that a Career Limiting Move?" (Career Skills Press 2001).

Q: *If your colleagues agree that something is wrong, should you act as a group?*

A: Resist the urge to confront the boss as a group, said Alexandra Delis-Brams, a psychologist in Sun Valley, Idaho.

Continued.

If the Boss has a problem, maybe You do, too; Continued



Chris Reed

www.mnsu.edu/humanres/profdev/

Lori Lamb, Chair
Professional Development
Committee
336 Wigley Administration
Minnesota State Mankato

Phone: 507-389-2015
Fax: 507-389-2960
E-mail: lori.lamb@mnsu.edu



A: "If he's going through a tough time, that could only make things worse," Ms. Delis-Brams said. She added that a group confrontation might be perceived as sabotage or mutiny. "Sometimes it's just gentler to raise concerns in a more private forum," she said.

Q: How do you broach the issue with your boss, one on one?

A: Respectfully, and only if you are close enough to your boss to approach him directly. Schedule a private meeting. If you think that your boss would be more comfortable having a discussion outside the office, ask him out to lunch, or suggest a midday walk for a breath of fresh air.

When you have your boss's attention, be direct. **Anna Maravelas**, a licensed psychologist and president of TheraRising.com in St. Paul, suggests beginning the conversation by stating appreciation for open lines of communication, then moving quickly into a statement of the facts that are cause for concern. Here, she said, it is important to call upon some of your documented observations, and to contrast the new behavior with patterns from the past.

"You want to ask the boss for his help in understanding the

change," she said. "After that, stay positive by asking what you can do to maintain your performance in light of the current situation."

Q: What if you're uncomfortable with the idea of a direct discussion?

A: While it's best to engage your boss in person, there are ways to express your concern discreetly or even confidentially, and that may be a wise move if you are concerned that your boss may react negatively or retaliate against you at work. Mr. Baldoni, the consultant from Michigan, said it was perfectly acceptable for employees to take their documented observations and opinions directly to the boss's boss, as long as they couch their opinions in broader terms of concern for the company's performance. "You're not being a tattletale if you run up the ladder," said Mr. Baldoni, author of "Great Motivation Secrets of Great Leaders" (McGraw Hill, 2005). "just as a team has the right to confront an underperforming team member, a team has the right to demand more from its manager, as well."

In cases in which a boss has committed sexual or physical harassment, employees should report the incident immediately to the human resources

department and, if necessary, seek assistance outside the company.

Arthur H. Bell, professor of management communications at the McLaren School of Business at the University of San Francisco, said that such behavior violated Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a law that protects employees against hostile work environments of many kinds.

Q: How should you respond if your boss asks you for help?

A: Always lend an ear, but if your boss opens up about personal problems, be careful to keep the interaction professional. **Ms. Maravelas**, the psychologist from Minnesota, said that it was best to refer your boss to an outside specialist or an employee assistance program, if your company has one. "Don't feel forced to take it upon yourself to fix your boss's problems," Ms. Maravelas said. "At a time of tension or stress, simply showing a thread of warmth and compassion can go a long, long way."

Villano, M. (2005, September 18). If the boss has a problem, maybe you do to. *The New York Times, Sunday Business Section*.

The Contagiousness of "Bad Apples" Adapted from an article by Kathy Gurchick.

Cold and flu season can have a negative impact on the work place, but bad vibes from one employee are just as contagious, and can infect the rest of the work team (Felps & Mitchell, 2006).

"Bad apples" are employees who are unhappy or unstable, and who bully or verbally attack their co-workers. However, managers and co-workers often have a difficult time dealing with a bad

apple if they perform well on their tasks and assignments. However, there are some strategies which can help send bad apples the message that their attitude is unacceptable:

- Restructure the work environment so that others can work collaboratively without including the bad apple.
- Affirm the positive relationships that exist between co-workers so that the negativity of the bad

apple will not spread throughout the team.

- Practice an attitude of caring detachment.

According to researcher William Felps, "It's cheesy, but simply by changing your attitude to 'you have no power over me, bad apples are less likely...to spoil office dynamics.'"

To see the original article, please visit: http://www.shrm.org/hrnews_published/articles/CMS_020514.asp#P-8_0

"You can't shake hands with a clenched fist."

~Indira Ghandi