
LEARNING WORKS FOR ALL OF US

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Working Opposite the General Trends by Betty Baxter

Our business typically has a different cycle than most others. Usually, business decreases when the economy is suffering. But for LearningWorks, when public sector employees are cutting budgets and reducing the number of positions, our volume of work goes up. I want to discuss why this happens.

Many may say that “of course, when you are in the business of resolving conflict and helping people, you will always be busy during times of uncertainty.” I believe this is true but there is more to it than that.

We are in demand because of “how” change occurs in these “times of downsizing.” As employers are asked to do more or work smarter or adapt to ever-changing managerial structure, they are very rarely given even the most basic of employer or manager-based support.

When we work with an organization during these times we discover:

- there are no employee-based goal setting, role clarification or performance appraisal meetings
- communication is exclusively top down
- demand for services is up
- resources are down
- plans for change may be abandoned or reworked without communication to employees.

The result?

As work volume goes up in the vacuum of no information or vague, general goals, employees – especially the most positive, dedicated employees – literally become ill with the stress and uncertain workplace conditions. They may experience:

- forgetfulness
- anger with fellow employees
- distraction, lack of attention
- listlessness, sleeplessness
- decreased motivation.

Sooner or later even the most dedicated employees begin to need sick days and, in the most extreme cases, voluntarily leave the position because the fulfillment they once had is no longer there.

At LearningWorks, our job is to help Human Resource departments and managers stop this cycle of loss and decreased engagement in the job. Usually we are called when the work site is no longer functioning well. Our task is to help rebuild the abandoned communication and workplace processes with effective new ones.

The challenge in this work is to help managers and employees see that more time, energy and commitment to employee knowledge through clear and prompt communication will save time and money later on. A day for a work team on how to create a new positive environment or clear definition of new roles and responsibilities make the employees safe and interested and ensure the job gets done in this time of turmoil. Unfortunately, many managers get caught in the “reactive” role. The “people skills and relationship development” is always seen as the last priority. These activities take time – a lot of it – and your heartfelt attention. But over the long term, they are far more cost effective and, more importantly, result in a happier, productive workplace.

For ideas on early intervention or information on coaching for managers or staff, give us a call. We love to work with you before you really think you need us. Then maybe you won't need us at all!

Kudos for Jane

Here's an e-mail we received from one of our satisfied clients:

Consciousness, Consideration, Clarity, Conviction and, above all, Coaching

Consciousness is the awareness of what possibilities are out there. It's the niggling, pesky little voice that is telling you that you are alive. It is the stuff upon which dreams are built and within which we find the building blocks of our future. Consideration is continuous and careful thought. It is the separation of the wheat from the chaff, the cream from the milk. It is the harnessing of possibilities with the intent to take them for a ride. Clarity is the filtering process, the act of eliminating confusion and the purification of the thought process. Conviction is purpose with compelling, persuasive thought. It is the fire in the belly, the sights set on the horizon, the need to be more than you are and the desire to succeed. Conviction is the driving force that will ultimately carry you forward and cause the action to occur. Coaching is guidance, support, belief, wise counsel, and it is focused. Coaching is the act of nurturing, instructing, challenging, pushing and pulling. Coaching is guided by the desire to see another succeed, to excel, to accomplish goals that are on purpose. Coaching is a vision of what can be that is coupled with a roadmap to get there.

Jane exemplifies all the positive traits one could ask for in a coach. She helped provide definition around goals, supported the vision of the future, nurtured the thought processes around the possibilities and believed in success. Jane called me a few months ago just to check in with me and see how things were going. Our regular coaching sessions had ended some time ago so it was very nice to hear from her. She asked about some of the things we had talked about – losing weight, going back to school were among them – and it niggled at me

when I told her that I had made no progress with my fitness routines and going back to school was seeming a pretty distant hope. I recall her parting words of encouragement where she once again articulated the vision. She said she could picture me walking up to the podium to accept my MBA. I was all dressed up, looking fit and happy. I ask you – how can I disappoint Jane?

Six weeks ago, I started going to Weight Watchers. I am acting with conviction. So far, I have lost over 20 pounds and there is no stopping me. My energy is back up and I am once again active. My wife has said how happy she is that she can once again give me a hug around my waist and her arms can touch.

Yesterday, I finalized arrangements to return to school and I am commencing the MBA program at Royal Roads on April 25, 2004. It will be challenging and difficult at times but it feels so good right now.

We may wonder at times what sort of impact we have on the lives of others. We may wonder what sort of a difference a kind word or a nice gesture can really make. We may not know how a smile can turn someone's day around or how an e-mail to some friends may pick them up when they need it.

If ever any of you, my friends, at LearningWorks question the value of the work you do or the impact you have on the lives of others, I hope that this note reinforces your conviction.

To you, Jane, words won't do my "thank you" justice. I'll save a big hug for you for next time we meet.

Next Breakfast Meeting

Please join us for a discussion on Early Intervention.

Time: 8:00 a.m.
Date: Thursday, March 25, 2004
Place: LearningWorks
Suite 205 – 1110 Hamilton Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2S2

RSVP: LearningWorks at 604-669-6757 by March 22nd



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