



Live Your Strengths

Welcome to the January 2009 edition of *Live Your Strengths*, the monthly e-newsletter from In Search of Excellence.

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Goal Setting and New Year's Resolutions

Have you made some commitments to yourself about changes you would like to make in 2009? To help ensure your New Year's resolutions don't get left behind in the January rush, here are a few tips to keep you motivated:

Write down your goals. I know, I know... you're groaning at this point. But be honest - despite the number of times you have heard this advice, have you ever actually written down your goals? There are a number of reasons why this step is so important. First, this action forces you to clarify what specifically you are trying to achieve, so it's not just a fuzzy idea in your mind. Second, it signals to your brain that this goal is something that is important to you and not a fleeting thought or a wish. The importance of the goal is further reinforced in your mind when you write and review your goals on a regular basis.

Be willing to try new ideas and behaviours. In my experience, the people who have been most successful at achieving their goals are the people who treat life as a big, fun experiment. They are eager to try new things and learn new information. Some of these new ideas work for them and others don't. It's all part of the process. However, if you just keep doing the same things you've always done, you will keep getting the same results you've always gotten.

Look for other sources of inspiration. Put yourself in situations where you can meet people you would never normally encounter in the course of your regular activities. Take an interesting class in a subject outside of the field of your work and look for ways you can incorporate some of that new learning into your work or personal growth goals. Invest a minimum of 3% of your income back to yourself in the form of personal and professional development: books, trade publications, coaching, courses, and seminars. While this may seem like a big investment for some, it often only takes one or two good ideas to completely change and improve how you are currently doing things.

Could you use some guidance to achieve your goals? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session to jumpstart your year and make 2009 your best year yet!

Coaching New Employees to Success (Part 3)

This month's newsletter will continue the discussion about how to take a 'coach-approach' to

transitioning new employees into their jobs. In previous articles, I have discussed the importance of being very clear about the purpose and definition of a new employee's position and understanding the employee's key strengths and values to learn how they can best contribute to the organization.

The next step in easing the transition is all about *other people* – and expectations. An average person will spend around 90,000 hours of his/her life at work – for many people, this is more time than they will spend with their spouses or families. So these work relationships are critical, not only to an employee's chances of being successful on the job, but also for his/her well-being and sense of community.

Often the largest source of conflict among co-workers stems from unmet expectations. Think back to the last time you were upset by a co-worker's actions. My guess is that somewhere in the conflict there was an unspoken expectation that was violated. For example, you may have expected a higher quality of work on a project that you felt was important. Or perhaps you thought a colleague could have made a more concerted effort to participate in a recent team-building exercise. Regardless of the specific situation, the behaviour of your co-worker was just not what you expected.

Although we will never be able to completely rid ourselves of the problem of unmet expectations, we can greatly reduce misunderstandings and conflict through clear communication. It is particularly critical for people starting in new positions to clarify both what is expected from them and what they expect from others they work with.

Some of the items for new employees to clarify are obvious ones such as work hours, policies on overtime and so on. However, some of the most important expectations are relational issues that are often overlooked. For example, how do you prefer to have the new employee communicate with you? By phone? In person? Email/Text message? What types of decisions would you like to be consulted on? In what areas is the new employee free to just go ahead and make decisions?

These questions should also be put to the new employee; what is his/her preferred method of communication? What is his/her comfort level with making certain decisions in the first few months on the job?

By taking the time early on to clarify expectations, the likelihood of developing solid, productive relationships with co-workers in the organization is greatly increased. And, as a side note, if you have not had these conversations with your current co-workers, it's never too late to start! Join me in this month's *Live Your Strengths* Challenge: Clarify and Manage Relational Expectations.

***Live Your Strengths* Monthly Challenge: Clarify and Manage Relational Expectations**

When assisting an employee to transition into a new position, it is helpful within the first few days to clarify how you will best work together:

- As your manager, some things you should know about me/my style of managing are...
- I prefer to communicate by _____ (phone/in person/email).
- I would like to meet with you on a regular basis (i.e. daily, weekly, monthly).
- These are the issues _____ you will need to consult with me on before making decisions.
- I would like you to just handle these types of decisions _____ without my

involvement unless you have questions about the best course of action.

It is also very beneficial for new employees to communicate their preferences both to their direct reports (if applicable) and any other people in the organization they will be working with on a regular basis.

As an added benefit, you may find the more frequently these conversations happen in an organization, the more thought people will give to clarifying expectations in other situations and on other projects. This increased communication will have an overall positive effect on co-worker relationships in the organization as a whole.

Cheers,

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