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Identifying Dangerous Interpersonal Communication Problems

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Millard MacAdam

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Interpersonal communication effectiveness is a key to gaining and maintaining a stellar management team, a supportive and productive staff, and loyal, long-term customers. As a leader, you'll know there's trouble when you can observe the following clues. The more that are present and the degree they are present indicates the relative risk of significant problems thwarting the optimum performance of your staff, management team and entire organization. Observe carefully and encourage others to observe carefully for these symptoms of dangerous communication problems.

SOME PEOPLE WON'T READILY COOPERATE - Cooperation indicates harmony. The absence is an early alert that relationship problems are in the way of optimum productivity. Check for hidden issues.

SOME PEOPLE ARE BEING AVOIDED - Avoidance is a coping strategy when people are uncomfortable and want to distance themselves from others.. You'll want to find out why before the underlying problems and pinches become crunches. Crunches take lots longer to repair than pinches!

MESSAGES AREN'T BEING RETURNED PROMPTLY - The individual might be swamped or they may not want to talk to you or other people. This discourteous behavior should ring alarm bells. Uncover the motivation behind it and then adjust the workload, train or coach the individual, or modify expectations before you lose good employees and customers.

TEAM MEMBERS FAIL TO ACHIEVE VITAL GOALS - A failure to establish and maintain open, direct, and congruent interpersonal communication between team members often results in restricted performance and failure to achieve agreed upon goals. Assess the interpersonal dynamics of your team and help them develop the needed team player values and skills needed for stellar performance.

MORE MISTAKES ARE BEING MADE - A failure to understand instructions or expectations will often result in errors. Further, a problem in interpersonal communication and mutual understanding is deadly to quality. Interpersonal communication skills' training is indicated.

THERE IS FINGER POINTING OR CRITICISM - Self-centered, defensive behaviors such as these are indicators of either individual fears or problems or an initial rip in the cultural fabric of the organization. It's time to investigate, determine the issues and coach the offenders toward exhibiting more productive behaviors.

MOTIVATION IS DOWN AND MORALE IS SUFFERING - You've possibly missed the early

warning signs or have not taken corrective action and are now paying a price. A situation analysis and corrective action plan are vital. Enhanced interpersonal communication is probably part of both the understanding of the situation and the cure of the productivity-blocking behavior..

PRODUCTIVITY IS SLIPPING OR STAGNANT - The incentive to take remedial action has been raised at this point because now the entire organization is at risk. Kick into high gear to understand the problem and assertively address the root problems in a positive and caring way. Listen to everyone and make sure you and they understand the concerns and issues that surface.

STAFF TURNOVER IS HIGH - People will only stay in positions in your company as long as their wages compensate the personal price they pay for being there. When they can no longer cope and function within your company culture, you will have increasing levels of employee turnover. An estimated 85% of people leave or are fired from jobs due to relationship problems, not performance. Use exit interviews to understand the issues and take positive action now.

YOU'RE LOSING BUSINESS - Customers will pay the fair price you expect for your goods and services only when they perceive adequate value and enjoy doing business with you and your staff members. If you experience the above warning signs of communication problems inside your organization, your customers and others outside will see and feel them as well. You must gain and retain customer-satisfying staff members who communicate and perform well or you will lose good staff members and your customers.

At this point, a 360 degree interpersonal communication assessment and feedback process is indicated to discover the interpersonal areas that need strengthening. My advice is to get professional help from a professional business coach who can clearly explain how they will help you determine the problems rather than the symptoms. Also, how they will help you and your people enhance the interpersonal relations and communications within your company.

If you need help in mastering and implementing any of the skills and tactics mentioned, I'm here for you! Please visit the Call-A-Coach section of my web site for more information.

About the author:

Dr. Mac shares with business owners the practical knowledge and insights he gained as a small company CEO. He founded Sycamore Ranch, Inc. when 27 and as CEO led his partners and a staff of 100 for 16 years in developing and operating the 50 acre recreational facility.

Years later, he integrated what he learned from his Doctoral program at USC with his practical business experiences and began consulting. For four decades Mac's coached business owners in mastering and applying "how to" leadership and managerial skills for: Hiring and retaining only the top ten percent producers; Optimally deploying and supervising staff to maximize their personal motivation; Developing high integrity leadership teams; Facilitating mutual performance accountability and peer coaching processes; and, Integrating his Intentional Business Integrity Process into their company operations. Mac has served leaders in manufacturing and high tech companies; accounting, banking and insurance enterprises; medical and health care organizations; service and retail oriented businesses; as well as educational, governmental and non profit organizations. Q&A ProActive Leadership 888-648-5552 or MacAdam@PALConsulting

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