

THE KENNA COMPANY HELPING LEADERS SELECT & ENGAGE HIGH IMPACT PERFORMERS

Listening With Your Answer Running

You sit down at lunch with one of your co-workers and he asks you about the vacation you just returned from in Colorado. You say *"It was great! We started to feel like we were really on vacation when we went to Red Rock National Park in Colorado Springs."* You take a breath before continuing to tell him about your trip. Ooooops, too long. He jumps in.

"We went to Texas, you know the home of longhorn steers and President Bush" he says. *"We drove down and stopped first in Dallas. Wow, what a city. Six Flags was probably the most fun we've ever had. Billy rode every roller coaster"* And on he went.

All you had to say was 'vacation' and it triggered a memory. Rather than listen to you, he couldn't wait for you to pause so he could tell you about his adventure. In fact, by asking you about your vacation, he was probably just creating a way for him to talk about his vacation.

I lead a lot of communication skills training workshops. The consensus among my clients is that interruptions—intentional or not—are rude; they signal to the speaker that the listener is not listening or engaged. Casual chats about vacations are one thing, but when this happens in business it can be a problem. I call it

'listening with your answer running.'

Consider this example:

Manager: *"Hey boss, I've got some GREAT ideas I'd like to tell you about on how to approach the Wilkinson deal. Got a minute? I promise I'll be brief."*

VP: *"I've got a minute, but that's all. By the way, I was planning on stopping by to ask you about the proposal you were working on for Taft. Is it done?"*

Manager: *"I'll have it finished by tomorrow. That's when it's due. Here's my first idea."*

VP: *"Wait a minute. What do you mean tomorrow? We need to e-mail it tomorrow and I need time to review it before we send it."*

Manager: *"Okay, I'll go work on it right now."*

Continued on Page 2 – **Listening**

PASS THIS ON:

I'm done reading this issue of 'Promoting Excellence™' sent to us by The KENNA Company. Please route it right away to:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Employees Who Quit, But Still Collect a Paycheck

Do you know people who don't seem to love—or even like—their jobs? People who are more preoccupied with little league rather than their performance at work? Who even spend more time talking to others about their team than they do working at work. When it's quitting time they are 'out the door'. They don't resign, though. They know how to do what's necessary to keep from looking too bad and to keep from getting fired. These employees are disengaged from their jobs, but still on the payroll.

There are many reasons people become disengaged from their jobs:

1. **Poor job fit**—It's the square peg, round hole issue. I see it all the time. At workshops I lead, people often tell me *"Now I understand why I hate my job."* Sad! Before hiring or promoting someone, it is critical to look past skills (can they do the job?) to 'job fit' (will they do the job?)
2. **Poor management**—Too few managers are skilled at (or engaged by) motivating and coaching their employees. Too few orient new employees to their jobs correctly. Too few clearly define expectations and give feedback, recognition and praise on the spot. Too many managers play favorites, spending all their time with their 'friends'. Too many managers neglect signs of disengagement, failing to take action until the problem gets out of control.

Continued on Page 3 — **Employees Who Quit**

www.kennacompany.com 816-943-0868

Here is a manager eager to share a couple ideas. He knows the VP is in a hurry. He's prepared to be brief. He's (quietly) hoping for some recognition and encouragement for thinking outside the box. (We all need recognition and encouragement.) What he got was a dust off. The VP didn't acknowledge his ideas in any way. Instead, she talked about what was on her mind, virtually dismissing his excitement.. The VP was listening to his request for time with her answer running. She went immediately to her agenda—the proposal.

The messages sent by the VP:

- My agenda is more important than yours.
- I didn't listen to you when you stopped me.
- You are late with what I need.

The messages heard by the manager:

- I'm not important.
- My ideas aren't valued.
- I know the proposal was due tomorrow.
- Don't try to approach her again.
- This place _____.

Is there a better way for the VP to handle this situation so that everyone wins? Certainly. She could have acknowledged the manager's initiative and asked him to share his ideas at another time (*"stop by my office after 4 pm"*). The manager would have felt heard and wouldn't have minded moving from his agenda to hers. Later, when the VP does allow the manager to share his ideas, she should really listen, with an open mind.

Okay, so how do we 'listen with an open mind'?

- **Remove or avoid distractions.** For instance, if you have a tendency to look around when others are talking, sit or stand where your view is restricted.
- **Don't multi-task.** If someone drops by your office to talk, come out from behind your desk and make the person feel welcome. Don't take phone calls during conversations. (This may be the most irksome thing people do to show others they are unimportant.)
- **Set reasonable boundaries.** Provide a time limit. If you have something else to do soon, let the person know that you have, say, 10 minutes, so they know to get right to the point. If you don't have time right then tell the person and then agree on another time. If possible, go to them or make it a neutral and quiet location.
- **Ask open ended questions that** show your interest and increase your understanding. If something didn't quite make sense, or you didn't understand, say so. Ask the person to explain further.
- **Clarify:** After the speaker has finished tell them what you believe you heard. This gives them the opportunity to correct unclear messages.

Respond as appropriate. It may be okay to just end by thanking the person for sharing their thoughts. If you have a different opinion—and still have it after the conversation—explain how and why you think differently. You will be able to do this effectively because you will really understand what the other person's position is.

Here's the lesson: Surveys indicate that most employees feel that they are unappreciated. They also show one of the reasons employees become dis-engaged is they feel they are often discounted by management.

Effective listening skills are an important component of effective communication. Admit it, effective communication is hard for most of us. It takes knowledge of self and others. It takes understanding and appreciating what effective listening looks and feels like. It takes practice and hard work to master interpersonal skills. To improve your listening skills, ask others for feedback – either informally or using a high-quality 360 instrument to gather input on how others perceive your communication—and listening—skills..

By Joe McKenna The KENNA Company. ©2004

Contemplate This...

(Do either of these quotes speak to YOU?)

"There is no necessary connection between the desire to lead and the ability to lead and even less the ability to lead somewhere that will lead to the advantage of the led".

Bergen Evans

"Anxiety is caused by a lack of control, organization, preparation, and action."

David Kekich

How to Delight Your Customers

Smile. Yep, smile. It's amazing how powerful a smile can be. Greet everyone with a smile. Smile when you call someone on the phone. Think how someone smiling when they first greet you makes you feel. Most people see someone smile as a sign of friendliness and welcome. We also seem to trust people who greet us with a smile more. Try it. Watch the response. I'll bet they smile back. What's the old saying? "

"If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours."

This newsletter is sent to you compliments of

The KENNA Company

www.kennacompany.com 816-943-0868

Continued from page 1 – **Employees Who Quit**

Disengaged employees are dangerous to companies. Their attitudes are contagious, eventually spreading to affect others. A once proud culture can become decimated by unhappy employees. Exaggeration? Nope, I see it happen far too often.

What can you do? Find out why the person is disengaged. Consider these approaches:

First, decide whether this is an employee you really want to keep. In too many instances, clients have told me “*We should have terminated him/her a long time ago.*” I always ask “*Why haven’t you?*” If you shouldn’t keep them, let them go. It’s best for the company. It’s best for them.

If the employee is someone you believe in and want to re-engage, you can take a number of approaches to help:

- **Tell** them what you are noticing (or hearing from their co-workers). Ask them to share their thoughts about this ‘perception’. Ask them what they like and don’t like about their job situation. Make it non-threatening (vs. a ‘wrong answer and you are fired!’ discussion); off site if possible.
- **When** they answer, don’t interrupt. Listen. Aim to understand them and their explanation. Ask questions only to clarify YOUR understanding. Let them know what you are hearing.
- **Use** quality assessments to understand their competencies, motivators and behaviors. (We can send you samples of some excellent assessment reports that will help you understand what to expect from using the right assessments).
- **Look for how they fit—or don’t fit—the** job they are in. (Note: I’m often asked to meet debrief managers and employees on their assessment reports). Often you discover ways to help, coach, motivate and develop them.
- **Be** their coach. (Visit our website for tips about this).
- **Hire** an Executive Coach to help them define goals, keep them on track, provide encouragement and feedback, hold them accountable for commitments).

If these approaches don’t produce the results you’re seeking, consider two additional options:

- **Redesign** the job so that it better fits their work style and motivations
- **Reassign** them to a job for which they are a better fit

Finally, if they remain dis-engaged you may need to let them go. Think about it. If they’ve already quit, wouldn’t it be best to take them off the payroll?

Know someone who is disengaged at your place of work. Write us and tell us what’s going on and what the impact is on you and the company. We’ll address as many situations as we can in our next newsletter.

joe@kennacompany.com



For Motivation Your Employees

Employees who are in ‘great-fit’ jobs, don’t need much to be motivated. **The key with them is to ensure you don’t de-motivate them.** How? Don’t assign them to projects, put them on teams or assign them long-term tasks for which the fit is not good. Sure, we all have to do some things at work that we don’t like. That’s when it helps to know how to ‘flex our style’. (Call me if you’d like to learn more about how people ‘flex our styles’).

Most managers, however, have at least a few employees who do need your help getting motivated. Here are a few ideas for how you can help them stay engaged at work:

- Offer words of encouragement—especially when they are working extra hard or when times are tough
- Give verbal pats on the back—Catch ‘em doing something well and tell them how well they’ve done
- Send them a written “*Job well done!*” note (Personal notes are rarely sent in this ‘email age’, which makes them even more special—and powerful.)

About The KENNA Company

Founded in 1996

We provide leaders with services and products that help their companies select and engage high impact performers

We specialize in (click topic to learn more):

- Employee Selection
 - Benchmarking the job
 - Candidate assessment for job fit
- Assessments
- Executive Coaching
- Team Building
- Communication Skills Training
- Leadership Training and Development
- Employee Development Assistance
- Customized Training
- Customized 360 Feedback
- Customized Employee Satisfaction Surveys

Contact info:

Phone : 816-943-0868

www.kennacompany.com

info@kennacompany.com

Stepping Stones to Successful Leadership™

Mindi McKenna, PhD, MBA uses a metaphor of 'Stepping Stones™' when coaching healthcare leaders and consulting with healthcare organizations in order to help them enhance their effectiveness. These "Stepping Stones" are:

Credibility: Successful leaders exhibit competence (skills, knowledge, ability) and character (values, beliefs and behaviors). Credibility is the starting point for anyone who desires to earn others' trust and respect.

Clarity: Successful leaders provide clear direction; they clearly communicate a compelling vision that attracts others to contribute toward the achievement of that vision.

Collaboration: Successful leaders create cohesive teams of diverse individuals who respect one another, and are deeply committed to the purpose they share.

Coordination: Successful leaders ensure decisions and actions, resources and processes are aligned with key goals and priorities; they manage and measure the achievement of results.

Change: Successful leaders equip themselves and others with the resilience and the capacity for renewal that are necessary to withstand the pressures of continuous change and the ongoing quest for further innovation and improvement.

These 'Stepping Stones for Successful Leadership' are built on the premise that anyone who aspires to lead well must live well, that we must first be leaders before we demonstrate strong leadership. Leading involves being, not just doing. As leaders -we earn credibility through our competence (knowledge, skills, experiences and expertise) and our character (values, beliefs, attitudes and trustworthiness). To lead well, we must bring clarity of direction (vision, mission, purpose and goals); we must communicate the vision in clear and compelling ways to those whose involvement and insights we seek.

Leaders are, by nature or necessity, great collaborators. To lead successfully, we must inspire others' commitment toward a shared vision. To the extent we're able to build shared commitment, we build highly cohesive and yet richly diverse teams of people who work well together in order to achieve what none could accomplish individually.

Continued top of next column—Stepping Stones

Continued—Stepping Stones

Virtually all successful leaders recognize that vision and inspiration alone are insufficient to achieve remarkable results.

Leading well requires the alignment of decisions and activity for the achievement of goals; the coordination of resource utilization for optimal impact.

Successful leaders equip those they lead to flourish in the midst of change - to cultivate resilience and renewal that are necessary for continuous change and improvement. Strong leaders are adaptable and they persevere, and more importantly, they enable others to do so as well. Without resilience and renewal, people experience burnout - the stress and fatigue that result from an environment brimming with chaos and complexity. Good news!! All of us can develop these attitudes and practice these behaviors. All of us can enhance our credibility, clarity, collaboration, coordination and capacity for change. We can become better leaders.



The 'Stepping Stones' metaphor provides a mental model for envisioning and practicing essential leadership attitudes and behaviors in healthcare. The principles are appropriate, though, to any leadership situation. Dr. McKenna can be reached at 816-309-9925 or visit her at www.mindimckenna.com. Mindi also provides Leadership Training and Consulting for The KENNA Company

Can we help you or your company?

Look around our website and learn more about The KENNA Company or call and talk to us. If you have colleagues who would be interested in receiving our newsletter, they can register at our homepage.

www.kennacompany.com 816-043-0868
joe@kennacompany.com