

INFORMATION YOU NEED



"Mapping Behaviors"

by Markku Kauppinen

Today I was talking with someone and for some reason my thoughts and the conversation turned to my previous career in the banking industry. I really liked my job at the bank for two main reasons. First, I was involved in commercial lending and it offered me an opportunity to learn a lot about different kinds of businesses. You should not lend money to businesses you do not know and understand. I got to learn about all types of businesses, from automobile dealers to asbestos removal companies.

The second reason was that I was able to learn a lot about people, both customers and employees. Not surprisingly, this was a lot more challenging part of the job – and also more rewarding.

At the time, the banking industry was beginning to change. We were trying to change the culture of the bank from customer service to a sales culture. It sounded very good and certainly made a lot of business sense. We even had troops of consultants to help us make this change. We were ready.

But no one stopped to ask a couple of important questions. Are we ready to let go of the past? What do we need from our employees? Do we know what we need them to do?

I knew it was not going to be easy when the maintenance department showed up and removed the hands of a clock that was built into the wall of one of my branches. I had to ask the obvious question: "Why??!!"

The answer was simple: "We cannot remove the clock because it is built into the wall. We can only remove the hands."

"But why?" I asked.

Straight-forward answer again: "As you know we will pay more attention to sales and less attention to service. That will mean longer teller lines and we do not want to let our customers know how

long they are standing in line.” Could it be this easy? I wondered.

The next morning my employees spent the first hour of their day reassuring our loyal customers that their bank was still financially stable. It is amazing how much fear missing clock hands could instill. By noon we had covered our faithful clock with a banner – “Great Rates on Second Mortgage Loans!” – if my memory serves me right. Problem solved.

The rest was a lot more difficult. The teller lines grew, but we opened more ATMs, satellite branches and customers began to change their behaviors. The lines got gradually shorter again. The biggest challenge was how to change the employee behaviors. Including mine. It was not that we did not want to or did not try. The problem was that no one at the top really knew what those behaviors should look like. Except that new behaviors were needed to change the bank.

Not only that, the top management had a really hard time letting go of the past behaviors. They wanted it all. Go and sell more loans – but make no mistakes. Bring in a loan, get a pat on the back – if that loan is less than stellar, you are in trouble. I do not know if you have ever been in a situation like this, but I can tell you, it was frustrating and demoralizing. “Someone please make up their mind!” became the favorite water cooler topic.

It has been a long time since that clock lost its hands. However, since then I have heard the same story in its different versions hundreds of times. I would be surprised if I did not hear it again this week. The reason is simple. All businesses want to be more successful and their management knows that their employees determine their success. At the same time they often are frustrated that they cannot identify, define, and communicate what employee behaviors will create success.

So, how do you do that? At a macro-level, first, you need a plan. Most organizations have no problem with this step, although at times you can

argue about the quality and the wisdom of the plan.

Second, you need to clearly determine what behaviors will be required to execute this plan. This is where it gets a little tricky. While competencies and skills are fairly easy to define, behaviors are not. For example, often employees are asked to carry out behaviors that are contradictory. Have you ever had a job like that? I think we all have. Not a lot of fun.

Actually defining the required behaviors is not complicated anymore. We call it mapping. You start with the business plan, identify what is needed to carry it out, and map the successful behaviors. These behaviors can be defined clearly and development plans can then be developed. The best part is that the mapping will ensure that employees are not asked to do opposing behaviors at the same time – like sell more loans and make no more mistakes.

If your organization is not mapping behaviors already, do not feel bad. Many are still not. But if you are not, it may be time to get a little worried because more organizations every day are beginning to map the behaviors; it is becoming a necessity. It is the organizations with the best execution of their business plans that usually win. It is the organizations that understand the successful employee behaviors that always win. They are ones that ask questions like: Are we ready to let go of the past? What do we need from our employees? Do we know what we need them to do?

I still sometimes think about that clock without its hands. It was the most visible and real indication that the bank was going to change. No wonder the change took a long time. We could not even keep track of it.

Markku Kauppinen is the President of Extended DISC N.A., Inc. He helps executives to make better decisions about their employees, teams and organization. Markku may be reached at markku.kauppinen@extendeddisc.com

"All of us Are Stuck on Suck- Ups"

by Marshall Goldsmith

We all hate suck-ups. So why do we surround ourselves with them?

I have reviewed more than 100 custom-designed leadership profiles for major corporations. These documents typically feature boilerplate language that describes the leadership behaviors companies desire. Such chestnuts include "communicates a clear vision," "helps people develop to their maximum potential," "strives to see the value of differing opinions," and "avoids playing favorites."

One item I have never read is "effectively fawns over executive management." While almost every company says it wants people to "challenge the system," "be empowered to express your opinion," and "say what you really think," there sure are a lot of high performers who are stuck on sucking up.

Not only do companies say they abhor such comically servile behavior but so do individual leaders. Almost all of the leaders I have met say that they would never encourage such a thing in their organizations. I have no doubt that they are sincere. Most of us are easily irritated--if not disgusted--by derriere kissers. Which raises a question: If leaders say they discourage sucking up, why does it happen so often? Here's a straightforward answer: Without meaning to, we all tend to create an environment where people learn to reward others with accolades that aren't really warranted. We can see this very clearly in other people. We just can't see it in ourselves.

So now you may be thinking, "This guy Goldsmith is right. It's amazing how leaders send out subtle signals that encourage subordinates to mute their criticisms and exaggerate their praise of the powers that be. And it's surprising how they can't see themselves doing it. Of course, Goldsmith isn't talking about me. I don't do this in my company." And maybe you're right. But how can you be so sure that you're not in denial?

I use an irrefutable test with my clients to show how we unknowingly encourage sucking up. I ask a group of leaders the following question: "How many of you own a dog that you love?" Big smiles cross these executives' faces as they wave their hands in the air. They beam as they tell me the names of their always-faithful mutts. Then we have

a contest. I ask them, "At home, who gets most of your unabashed affection?" The multiple choices: one, your husband, wife, or partner; two, your kids; or three, your dog. More than 80% of the time, the winner is the dog.

I then ask them if they love their dogs more than the members of their families. The answer is always a resounding no. My follow-up: "So why does the dog get most of your attention?" They reply with answers that all sound about the same. "The dog is always happy to see me." "The dog never talks back." "The dog gives me unconditional love, no matter what I do." In other words, the dog is a suck-up.

I can't say that I am any better. I have two dogs at home. I travel all the time, and the dogs go absolutely nuts when I return from a trip. I pull into the driveway, and my first inclination is to open the front door, go straight to the dogs, and exclaim, "Daddy's home!" Invariably, the dogs jump up and down, and I give them a hug. One day, my daughter, Kelly, was home from college. She watched my typical love fest with the dogs. She then looked at me, held her hands in the air like little paws, and barked, "Woof woof."

Point taken.

If we aren't careful, we can treat people at work like dogs: by rewarding those who heap unthinking, unconditional admiration upon us. What behavior do we get in return? A virulent case of the suck-ups.

Here's how leaders can stop encouraging this behavior. Begin by admitting that we all have a tendency to favor those who favor us, even if we don't mean to. We should then rank our direct reports in three areas. First, how much do they like me? (I know you aren't sure. What matters is how much they act as if they like you.) Second, what is their contribution to our company and our customers? Third, how much positive, personal recognition do I give them? In many cases, if we are honest with ourselves, how much recognition we give someone is more often highly correlated with how much they seem to like us than it is with how well they perform. If that is the case, we may be encouraging the kind of behavior that we despise in others. Without meaning to, we are

basking in hollow praise, which makes us hollow leaders.

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith recently been named by the American Management Association as one of 50 great thinkers and business leaders who have impacted the field of management. His 18 books include the Business Week best-seller, *The Leader of the Future and Global Leadership: The Next Generation*. Marshall is a world authority in helping successful leaders achieve positive change in behavior: for themselves, their people and their teams.

Extended DISC North America, Inc.

www.extendeddisc-na.com

info.usa@extendeddisc.com

info.canada@extendeddisc.com

1.800.257.7481