

## *Putting Things in Perspective*

By: Peggy L. McNamara

An important characteristic, for effective leadership, is the ability to put things in perspective. Throughout any business day, there are numerous situations that arise that create anxiety and stress, for both you and your staff of people or team members. It can be as small as the printer/copier experiencing some technical glitches to as huge as losing a major client. The key, of course, is for you to put things in perspective for not only your own sanity but for the effectiveness of those around you. Here are some tips to help with just that:

\*Concentrate on a solution versus blame. It is easy to get stuck in the rut of placing blame. You've all done it at some point in your life, whether it was last week in the office or 25 years ago with your sibling, you know what I am referring to: spending time and energy complaining and whining about the event, or the person that caused it, versus finding a solution to help overcome it.

Part of the job description for a mature leader is to not only allow the people around you time to vent their frustrations but to also know or realize when enough is enough. Your goal is to communicate to those around you how unfortunate the event was but it is time to discover a solution and keep reminding them of that over and over again until it sinks in. You can't control what people are going to do when they are out to lunch or on a shared commute home, but you can help set the tone in the workplace.

\*Be aware, and careful, of whom you choose to vent to. Leadership is not easy; you are only human and, that said, you have a breaking point; that is, a point where you feel the need to vent and let your frustrations go. Just like the people who work with you, every once-in-a-while you need to find an empathizing ear.

When that time comes for you, be very careful as to whom you choose to share your angst with. If you are a co-manager, don't go to the individual(s) on the team that you both manage, and complain about him/her, to them. It does not make for an effective work place environment. Find someone on an equal, or higher level than you to share your thoughts; either within your organization or outside of it, you decide what is best.

If you don't have anyone like that then work on dealing with it yourself by going for a walk, writing down in some type of journal your thoughts and feelings or send an email or voice mail to yourself to "get it all out." You need to deal with it however works for you so you can move on, not only for yourself but also for the people you lead.

\*Prioritize and communicate. Once the solution is figured out, help those around you by prioritizing the steps to take. In other words, give them direction. What are the logical things that need to be done and in what order and by whom? Include the bigger picture items as well as the more detailed ones. The clearer your direction is, the more people will be able to follow through on it. Don't be "gray" when it comes to delegation and dividing-and-conquering. Don't ever leave a meeting or spontaneous gathering without reminding your team what solution you are working towards and why. It is your job to keep the vision alive and the inspiration strong.

\*Realize what is important, and what is not. Don't waste precious resources on things that are not that big of a deal. Perfectionism, for example, can sure get in the way. Reflect on the situation, once dealt with, to discover what could be done next time around to prevent this type of thing from happening again, not in a blame mode but in a problem-solving mode. Don't allow yourself to get hung up on the minute details that can be easily overcome.

Leadership is something that you are all responsible for, whether it is part of your job description/title, or not. Sometime during the day you are a leader, even if it just because you are the first one off the subway or

commuter train. Putting things in perspective impacts the environment you work in and is a crucial skill for effectiveness in today's business climate. Make sure to do your part!

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