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a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

The First Class Manager Coach

A Candid Conversation About Workplace Culture

If you were asked to describe your workplace culture in just three words (a phrase or a series of unrelated words), which ones would you choose? What do you appreciate most about your culture? What is the best aspect of your culture that people on the outside of your organization can't see? What do your employees say about your culture right now? What are they probably thinking but not talking about? What are the most common complaints about your culture?

Every company has a culture. It defines who and what you really are—not who and what you say



you are. The culture is a collection of behaviors that a group of people demonstrate after “deciding” upon both the spoken and unspoken rules for working together. It’s as simple and complex as that. Culture consists of shared values, beliefs, philosophies, assumptions, attitudes, actions, and organizational structures. Employees and stakeholders experience your culture by observing verbal and nonverbal communication, decision-making processes, approaches to tasks and projects, and typical daily practices. All of these provide cues and clues about what actually happens in your “shop”.

As I write this message, a private client of mine is in the process of a job search solely because the culture in which she currently works makes her miserable. While she loves her job duties, she dreads going to the office. She describes the culture there as back biting, anxiety inducing, and resistant to truth. Bottom line? She’s tired of it. As a result, she feels she cannot stay. She tells me that such a toxic culture undermines her performance, her relationships, and her professional growth.

Obviously, this culture is not good for the individual. If you dig deeper, you also realize that this culture is not good for the organization either. My client is key talent, and when she jumps ship, the fallout will be expensive to her previous employer—in terms of money, energy, and time. Therefore, this situation negatively impacts everybody and everything. It adversely affects both people and profits.

So how do you describe YOUR culture? Is it rigid, secretive, punitive, critical? Does it invoke fear? Or is it tolerant, relaxed, flexible, and fun? Does it encourage creativity and learning? Does it foster trust? This ezine invites you to take a hard look at what’s really going on in your own workplace. There’s no better time than now

Sylvia

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Recently I heard a speaker say that “your culture is your only differentiator”. That statement struck me as true and profound. It also decided the focus for this ezine. Regardless of the kind of culture you

have, what kind of culture do you want? Seriously? Consider the following strategies for creating a culture that reflects the essence of your organization—a culture that grows profits and serves society because it inspires and retains needed talent.

Hire the best mission driven employees. Credentials are only part of the package with job applicants. If new hires don't support your mission, they undermine and sabotage the organization in the long run. Yes, you need to examine education, skills, and experiences, but you also need to make sure candidates have the right attitude toward work and the right amount of enthusiasm for your mission.

Align policies and procedures with your mission and culture. This strategy is about empowerment and authenticity. If you say your culture honors flexibility, then punishing people for requesting to leave an hour early for a doctor's appointment doesn't work. If you say that teams function independently in your culture, then blocking their methods to completing a project makes a mockery of your words. In short, write policies and procedures that support the culture.

Encourage open and prompt communication throughout the organization. A healthy culture promotes the free exchange of information, opinions, and ideas as a way of doing business each and every day. When people are comfortable sharing what's on their mind, conflicts get resolved faster and folks are happier. Proactively solicit feedback. Encourage expression of opposing viewpoints. Avoid shutting people down. Demonstrate that you value their contributions—even if you disagree.

Share and discuss company values regularly. Talk about values in weekly staff meetings. Make sure employees know what they are. Ask people to give specific examples of how they live those values on a daily basis and where they could improve. Take this further by discussing your values in the community. Help outsiders to better understand what is most important to you.

Model a “we are all in this together” attitude. While individuals

certainly matter, a team approach to everything that's happening in the organization is vital to nurturing a high functioning culture. Share successes, and share failures. Show your people that each one of them is in some way responsible for both. Tell them that all of you will solve problems together—that problems will not just be addressed by two executives or two managers behind closed doors. This helps folks to take more ownership in all aspects of the business.

Develop and stretch your employees. Provide opportunities for your staff to learn and practice new skills. Let them know it's safe to make mistakes from time to time. Give them higher levels of responsibility when they appear ready. Encourage them to take reasonable risks. Doing these sorts of things motivates employees and keeps them interested. The biggest killer of staff engagement is the status quo.

Terminate people who don't fit the culture you designed. When you observe that an employee simply has no intention of adapting to your culture and embracing it wholeheartedly, you need to cut the cord. Doing it sooner rather than later is best. If you wait, hoping that the situation will change, you sacrifice employee morale across the board. This sounds harsh, but termination is the only right action to take. Ultimately, it doesn't matter how skilled or experienced someone is. If he/she resists your culture, that person doesn't belong there.

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What Clients Say

As a result of your many years of executive experience in combination with your training in executive coaching, you are uniquely qualified to assist key management staff in the achievement of excellence. Your work with the staff referred to you resulted in visible improvement in their leadership abilities including decreased defensiveness, greater focus on strategic positioning, and increased engagement in policy discussions. In addition, all staff involved reported satisfaction with the coaching experience with some staff, as you know, deciding to voluntarily continue.

--Cindy Stewart, CEO, Family Health Council of Central PA

Offers and Opportunities

Difficult Bosses: Signs for Recognizing Them and Strategies for Navigating Life With Them

A Teleseminar With Sylvia

November 28, 2012

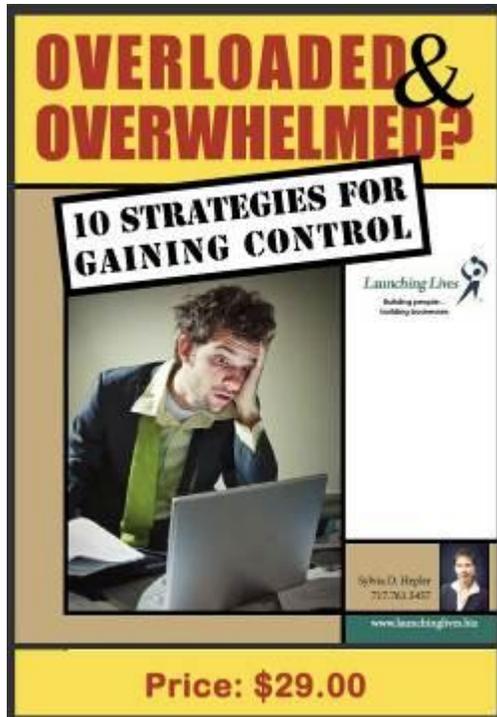
12:00 PM EST

[Registration \\$50](#)

Recording will be available



When you think about it, our bosses make or break our experiences in the workplace. Over the course of my long, diverse professional career I've listened to scores of colleagues and peers complain about their "difficult bosses". I've watched people weep with frustration, scream with rage, retreat into depression, and threaten to quit. During private coaching sessions clients frequently lament their bosses' inadequate, inappropriate, or downright bad behaviors. It's true: life with a difficult boss can be miserable. Life with a difficult boss can make you tired, scared, and sick. [More info here.](#)



Now Available Online

OVERLOADED and OVERWHELMED? 10 STRATEGIES FOR GAINING CONTROL A Workbook

This downloadable product was created as a result of the highly successful July 25, 2012 teleseminar focusing on the topic of overwhelm and how to deal with it. [Click for more information](#) and to order.

RESOURCES

If you are interested in obtaining a viable roadmap to create an “enviable culture”, check out Ann Rhoades’ book entitled: *Built on Values*. Recommended by Joe Bertotto, President of Strengths*Life Project, this gem is available on Amazon.com in hard cover for \$17.25.

Other resources related to developing a healthy work culture include two 2011 publications entitled: *The GREAT Workplace: How to Build It, How to Keep It, and Why It Matters* by Michael Burchell and Jennifer Robin (available on Amazon.com for \$16.00) and *Change the Culture, Change the Game* by Roger Connors and Tom Smith (also available on Amazon.com for \$17.00).

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TIP

Consider conducting a cultural assessment throughout your organization sometime within the first three to six months of the new year.

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Where in the World is SYLVIA?

At noon EST on November 28, Sylvia will host a live teleseminar on the topic, *Difficult Bosses: Signs for Recognizing Them and Strategies for Navigating Life With Them*. More information and registration is available on her website-- [click here for a direct link](#). Remember that Sylvia always makes downloadable recordings of the live session available for those unable to be present by telephone for the actual event.

On December 1, 2012 Sylvia will offer a fifty minute presentation entitled “Good vs. GREAT Goals: Secrets for Setting and Attaining Them” to Dress for Success clients during their Going Places Network event to be held at Camp Hill GIANT’s Community Room.

On December 14, 2012 she will conduct two hour-long workshops entitled “Growing Your Business: Strategic Thinking and Planning” during the Harrisburg Chamber’s day long Supplier Diversity Symposium to be held at the Best Western Premier--Central Hotel and Conference Center in Harrisburg.



Join Sylvia on these social networks!

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About This Ezine

This Ezine is 1) to provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to both personal and professional growth and 2) to invite them to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

Back issues are [available here](#). Send email by [clicking here](#) to manage your free subscription. Sharing content with attribution is encouraged

Launching Lives Ezine is dedicated, above all, to “building people ... building businesses.” ©2010, 2011, 2012

About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, LLC is an executive coach based in South Central PA. Her mission is to support corporate and nonprofit executives and business owners as they solve problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives. Her background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales. A [certified executive coach](#) through The Rescue Institute in Colorado and a participant in extensive continuing education, Sylvia is a platinum level expert author on [ezinearticles.com](#). She has produced an audio CD entitled, “Making Change”, [three special reports](#) for persons in management positions, and an audio product designed for new managers.

More information is available at her

[Launching Lives Website](#)

[Click to contact Sylvia by Email](#)

Reach Sylvia by phone at 717-761-5457

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives, LLC is a full service executive coaching company located in South Central PA. Its mission is to support managers and executives to solve their most pressing problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives utilizing a holistic approach. Launching Lives focuses on BUILDING PEOPLE through individual private coaching, group coaching, specialized products, workshops, speeches, and retreats. Most coaching takes place by phone.

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: “What can't I seem to resolve on

my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching is the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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