

5 KEYS to SUPREME WORKPLACE SUCCESS

Often people create many of their problems at work. An uncomfortable thought? Perhaps. Yet it's true. Folks do create and contribute to their own misery, frustration, anxiety, and lack of fulfillment. How do they do this? By behaving badly, inappropriately, inadequately, unskillfully, naively, and ignorantly. It happens more than you may think.

Although most people want to do the best thing in most circumstances, frequently they don't know what the best things look like. Things that can serve them well instead of sabotage their reputation and future... Things that can actually make them shine...

Now let's focus on YOU. Think about your top three problems or challenges in the workplace. Write them on paper. Look at them closely. Do those problems exist because you lack the skills to handle them, because you behaved poorly, or because you are denying what's really going on? You may say that you didn't create a certain situation. Somebody else did. Okay. But YOU have to deal with it. If you choose to ignore it or minimize it, it only grows bigger. If you mishandle it, it still plagues you or gets worse. So today is a good day to beef up your ability to deal with lingering, troubling issues head-on. Employ the following five keys to workplace success, and you can design a fabulous New Year for yourself:

① Never criticize your boss to others.

Criticizing your boss to other people is dangerous. Especially colleagues, staff, Board members, acquaintances, neighbors, and children. If your complaint gets back to your supervisor, you generally pay a price. The cost may be any of these: you are valued and trusted less, you receive fewer choice projects, you experience a cold shoulder, you lose a promotion opportunity. If you absolutely need to do it to clear your head, choose wisely. Seek out your closest, most trusted friend, the Human Resources professional, your spouse or partner, clergy or the boss him/herself. Yes, talking to the boss just may be the best thing you can do.

How do you frame it? First, avoid using statements that begin with YOU. This puts the other person on the defensive fast. YOU statements sound like accusations, and no one likes them. Second, avoid displaying significant emotion. Too much anger, frustration, disappointment, or childishness is a turn-off. Third, definitely present the criticism in terms of what you need. Examples include: I need certain resources for that project. I'll be in a great position to make our company shine if you provide me with x,y,z. In order to do my best work here I need x,y,z. Try these with a stable tone of voice, and watch your boss respond favorably.

② Stand out from the crowd.

Look for ways to make distinct, unique contributions in your workplace. Dig into your creative side and use it. Show your boss and your colleagues that you can think both inside and outside the box. Polish skills to a level that others don't. Learn to write well and to speak clearly. Say what you mean, and mean what you say. Approach tasks from a slightly different angle. Others notice.

Go the extra mile. Do that little bit extra... or a lot extra. Demonstrate that you are happy to exceed expectations. When you do, you make a lasting impression with supervisors who are in the position to recommend you for more responsibility and greater compensation. You cannot lose.

Adapt to changing circumstances. Put aside your leanings toward rigidity and determine what the circumstances call for. Allow yourself to be innovative. Take a few reasonable risks. Explore different options. Most of all, inspire others to take these same steps and enjoy how your example makes a huge difference for everyone in the organization. If you can adapt to change, you'll be a winner.

③ Follow up on everything.

Here are examples of situations you need to follow up on with some suggestions as to how to proceed:

the person who didn't return your phone call or email...

Say something like: I left you a phone or email message three days ago and haven't heard back from you. In order for me to move forward with this task, I need your input.

the package that wasn't delivered...

Phone the company from which you ordered the product and inquire if they mailed it yet. If not, ask them when they expect to mail it.

the colleague who snapped at you repeatedly...

Tell the colleague who snapped at you that you find his behavior unusual and you're wondering if he's okay. See what he says.

the boss who passed you by for that special project...

Tell your boss that you'd been looking forward to working on that key project and you aren't sure if she knew that.

the error in your paycheck...

Check in with the individual responsible for issuing your paychecks and point out the error. Make sure you take proof of the mistake with you, and clarify what the dollar amounts should be.

unusual silence from a close colleague...

Tell your close colleague that you've noticed how quiet she's been lately. Pause, and let her respond.

a rude remark or put-down...

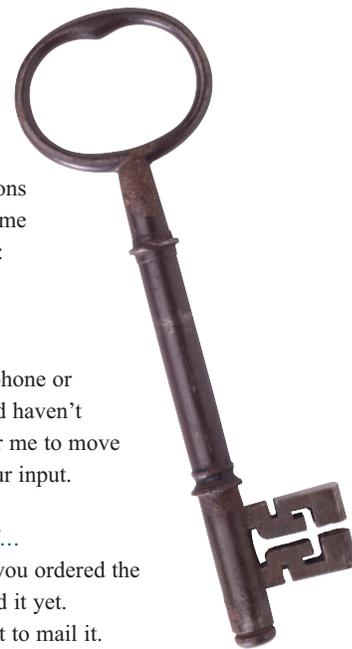
Tell the person who spoke rudely how his remark affected you. Politely but directly let him know that you aren't willing to accept that type of behavior.

lack of action on another's part...

Seek out the person who needed to act upon something but didn't. Say something like: Is there a reason why you haven't...? Stop talking to give her a chance to reply.

④ Offer solutions.

For every problem you take to your boss, be ready to offer at least one possible solution. By doing so, you can bring a smile rather than a grimace to your boss's face whenever he/she sees you coming. The more solutions you provide, the more creative and industrious you are perceived to be. Supervisors love solution-oriented people. Because they are already overloaded in most cases, the last thing bosses want is one more problem that requires major time and energy investment. If you do a lot of the thinking before you show up in the boss's office, you truly bring value to the organization.



⑤ **Use discretion.**

Another way to say this is: use good judgment. Use it in your speech, your mannerisms and behaviors, your actions, your expression of emotion, and your accounts of an incident. Failing to be discrete sets you up to lose in the workplace.

In your speech employ appropriate grammar, avoid profanity, provide details with good taste, choose a neutral, pleasant tone, start with “I”, and never cut people off before they finish talking.

Pertaining to your mannerisms and behavior, avoid finger pointing and invading others’ personal space, use a tissue if you must cough or sneeze, show interest in what someone is telling you, avoid staring for long periods of time, and wear clothing that suits the workplace.

Discrete actions include: offering to help a colleague with a task without making her feel inadequate or threatened, pointing out mistakes graciously without personalizing them, avoiding being a chronic clown, getting to work on time, holding doors for other people.

Regarding the expression of emotion, remember that *less is best*. Most people aren’t comfortable with crying, yelling, pounding fists, and verbal shredding. If you engage in these behaviors, stop now. Appearing to be out of control in the workplace is never a good thing.

As far as retelling an incident, do not exaggerate and stick to the facts as you recall them. Choose the high points. Be clear in your accounting, and keep the story short.

*By Sylvia Hepler
Executive Coach and Advisor
Sylvia@launchinglives.biz
717-761-5457*

