



Learned Personal Power

Perhaps you've heard of learned helplessness. It's a term that came out of psychology (Martin Seligman, Learned-Optimism). Scientists conditioned a dog with electric shocks every time a bell rang. Once the dog was conditioned to expect a shock every time the bell rang, they put the dog into an open box, where it could easily escape. Then they rang the bell, and the dog just laid there, awaiting what it thought was the inevitable shock. Dogs that hadn't been conditioned with the electric shocks simply jumped out of the box and ran off.

Sometimes it feels as if people around us have received similar conditioning. Often they just sit there, when the very things they want are easily within their reach. Something has squelched their natural drive for success. Great leaders seem to have the opposite conditioning effect on their people. First, they identify and

hire 'go getters'. Then they systematically pump them up, build their confidence and provide them with opportunities for small wins. Later, when a situation puts them in a 'box', they instinctively exhibit winning behaviors.

The beauty of being a person, rather than a dog, is that we have intelligence, self awareness and free will. We can actually go out and condition ourselves. Many of us do it in little ways, such as positive self talk, and asking good questions. It doesn't have to stop there. We can do the same thing for ourselves that great leaders do. We can set ourselves up for small successes and build up to the bigger challenges. It takes a change in focus - from the things we cannot do, to focusing on the things we can do.

Imagine you are learning a new hobby. Would you start out with an advanced project? Of

Overcome Perfection Paralysis

Perfectionism can be a terrible time-waster. A form of procrastination, perfectionism results from a paralyzing fear of achieving less-than-perfect results. By striving for perfection, perfectionists may never begin or end anything. They often labor over assignments longer than necessary and rework projects past deadlines – if they finish at all.

The first step to overcoming

Perfection Paralysis is to recognize that you are a perfectionist. This self-acknowledgment will free you to identify instances when you are defeating yourself by setting unrealistic and unattainable goals. Learn to recognize the difference between aspiring to excellence and striving for perfection: excellence is attainable, and perfection is not. No one, including you, is perfect. Develop more realistic assess-

Timely Humor

How I Made a Fortune...

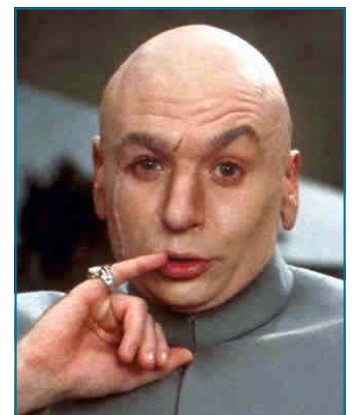
It was really quite simple. I bought an apple for one dime, spent the evening polishing it, and sold it the next day for two dimes. With this money I bought two apples, spent the evening polishing them, and sold them for four dimes. And so it went until I had amassed \$3.20. It was then that my great-uncle died and left me a million dollars.

course not, you'd look for 'Beginner' on every project you considered. Then you would move up as your experience and confidence improved. Personal power is very similar. Find some 'beginner' projects and build yourself up to the 'advanced' level. I often recommend volunteer work for newbies. It's a great way to build yourself up and poise yourself for greater challenges down the road.

Trivia Time

If you are thinking about counting to a billion one second at a time, you'd better start now. It will take you 12 days to count to a million, and 32 years to count to a billion.

The number of days in a millennium is increasing. The First Millennium (1-1000 AD) consisted of 365,250 days. The last millennium (1001-2000 AD) consisted of 365,237 days. The current millennium (2001-3000 AD) will have 365,242 days.



ments of yourself, others and your goals.

The following tips can help you overcome Perfection Paralysis.

- You can usually do a sufficient job in about 20 percent of the time it takes to do a "perfect" job.
- Give yourself permission to do something less than perfectly by breaking some of the "rules" you were taught.
- Delegate tasks when you can.

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Humor in the Workplace



Have you ever struggled with the right balance of humor and fun in the workplace? Clearly we want our people to be happy and enjoy their workday, so some humor is appropriate. In fact, there's plenty of research indicating that laughter is good for our health, our energy, our mindset, personal productivity and maintaining a positive approach to challenges. It's also a fundamental ingredient to creativity, which is highly valuable to all successful businesses in our knowledge based workplace.

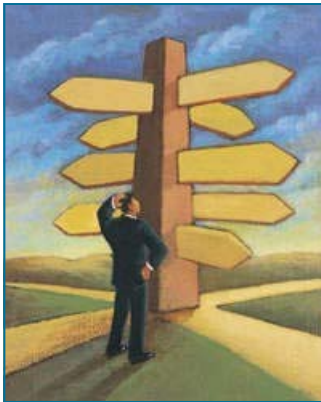
Conversely, we don't want the atmosphere at work to become

sophomoric or offensive to anyone. The only thing we can be reasonably sure of is that some people will get it wrong on occasion. So what are the guidelines to getting it right? Appropriate humor in the workplace helps to bond people together, rather than separating individuals or groups. This is bad news for Don Rickles' genre humor, which picks on individual idiosyncrasies. Further, it's bad news for blond jokes, or anything that victimizes a specific group or type of people. A better approach is to learn to laugh at ourselves and the everyday things that happen.

Once our people see their leader relax and laugh, they feel comfortable following suit.

Many organizations, ours included, struggle with email jokes, which have truly become pervasive. In addition to the time wasted, concerns about legal liabilities in the case of an action become worrisome. Speak with both your attorney and your HR team to strike the right balance in your company communications regarding email. The goal is to be legally covered without becoming a sterile workplace. It can be a challenging balance to strike.

"It is easier to bring in a hired gun — to take the heat."



Leading Change

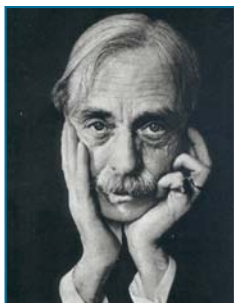
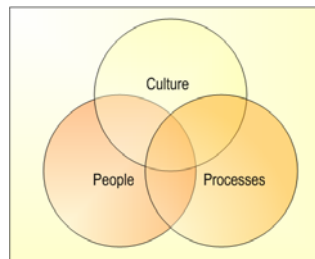
We are often asked to work with management teams to effect change. Whether we employ the Kotter model or the Moss Kanter model, or if we setup a Balanced Scorecard or some other set of metric is all beside the point. These are just the details; the real point of our efforts is what we call the 'stirring of the pot' to facilitate discussion. Many organizations actually use management consultants as the bad guys to help them wake up the troops. That's our job, and as a result, we are both loved and hated by people in the same firms.

It can be very challenging for management to play the bad guy, since they intend to stay there and face people everyday. It is easier to bring in a hired gun to take the

heat. They are usually there for the short-term, so their relationships with employees within the company are quite different. Management teams that need to effect dramatic change without outside assistance need to be prepared for personal rejection, high turnover and even short-term employment. Internal teams are often more successful with gradual change, which can be executed without

significant disruption of normal business operations.

There are techniques to minimize the emotional distress that employees experience with dramatic change. A credible approach is termed appreciative inquiry. In this approach, a systematic series of positive questions, designed to elicit positive responses, are employed to lead people through each step of the thought process and change. Check it out if you find yourself in a major change leadership situation.



"The trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be."

Paul Valery
(1871-1945)

"Can anybody remember when the times were not hard and money not scarce?"

Ralph Waldo Emerson
(1803-1882)

