

Good leaders listen, give credit when it's deserved

By Holly Culhane, Contributing Columnist



Having returned recently from a vacation, I feel both refreshed and refocused. It is amazing how stepping away from the office and opening your mind to new experiences can help you better understand and address some of the issues you left at home.

Such was the result for a friend of mine. She had a chance encounter with a friend's 7-year-old son at a social event. Seated next to the boy, she soon learned this guy was a talker. While he was bright, interesting and witty, he also could suck the air out of a room if permitted.

His parents are concerned that the boy is becoming a conversation hog; that he craves being the center of attention. And when others try to get in a word, the boy becomes upset about being interrupted.

Let's face it, we all have met people – whether they are 7 years old or 70 – who seem to be able to talk inhaling and exhaling. They really don't seem much interested in anything anyone else has to say. And the truth is that most of us have these tendencies to some degree. Most of us seem to be better talkers than listeners.

I give a lot of credit to the boy's parents for recognizing this tendency in their son and encouraging him to be a more focused talker and a better listener. Basically, their message is: If you don't want to be interrupted, give others a chance to talk. Really listen to what others have to say.

But this isn't one of those lessons you just learn as a child. It's a lesson you must keep practicing throughout your life.

Whether it's a co-worker or a boss, there are some people you like to work with and others who drive you crazy. In a productive, enjoyable workplace, where talented employees are hired and retained, you will find:

- Good listeners. Some people must be at the center of every story. They listen only to find a good spot to jump into and seize the conversation. They interrupt. They preach. Their experiences are more valuable than others. They really don't seem interested in what their co-workers or employees are saying. Good listeners make people feel appreciated and respected, and their ideas valued.
- Idea sharing. To some people, ideas are commodities to be "stolen." When a co-worker or employee offers an idea for a new product or problem solution, suddenly it becomes a colleague's or boss's idea. This form of theft can happen once, maybe even twice. But eventually employees will stop sharing their ideas and workplace productivity is lost.
- Credit giving. Similar to "idea stealing" is credit grabbing. Some bosses fear their stature will be diminished if their employees receive credit for breakthroughs and advances. The same is true for insecure co-workers, who fear shining a light on a colleague's accomplishments will somehow dim the light on their own careers. The truth is that giving credit where it is deserved

reflects positively on the boss and co-workers. Good leaders hire and nurture talented employees. This nurturing includes praising employees when it is deserved.

The best leaders and co-workers treat others as they would like to be treated – with respect and appreciation. They are both good communicators and good listeners. They create productive, creative workplaces. May we all fit into that category!

This article written by Holly Culhane first appeared online and in The Bakersfield Californian on July 28, 2014. Holly Culhane is president of the Bakersfield-based human resources consulting firm P.A.S. Associates. She can be contacted through her website www.pasassociates.com and through the [PAS Facebook](#) page or by phone at 631-2165.

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