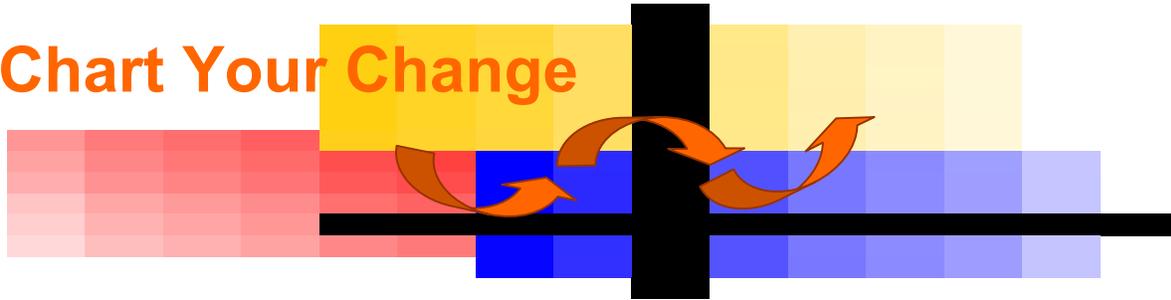


Chart Your Change



*“Dialogue is an art form with no ceiling
on the heights to which it can be lifted”*

-- Unknown



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Welcome to Chart Your Change.

In this issue:

1. Quotes of the Month
2. Lessons Learned - Holding the Right Conversation
3. Tip #6 - Master the Inner Work of Confrontation

1. QUOTES OF THE MONTH

“When conversations go awry, we look for causes and usually find them by blaming others or ourselves. The most generous-minded blame the relationship...Much of this blame is misplaced. Bad feelings are often the result of misunderstandings that arise from the differences in conversational style.”

-- Deborah Tannen

“...a man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest.”

-- Simon and Garfunkel, “The Boxer”

2. LESSONS LEARNED

Holding the Right Conversation

As adjunct faculty at NYU's School of Continuing and Professional Studies, I am in the fortunate position of teaching classes in management and leadership where so often, issues come up related to workplace challenges:

- How to deal with an impossible manager
- How to supervise a direct report whose behavior borders on the dark side
- How can a new or aspiring manager effectively manage relationships and influence others

There is always a choice to be made. The one that comes up every day is whether to confront and have that not-so-easy conversation or hold back and wait? In our scenario let's assume you are a direct report who is upset with your boss because you weren't invited to an important meeting. What are the costs of not taking any actions or taking inappropriate actions to your professional development?

Here are four steps to consider when you know there is an impending conversation looming in your not-so-distant future.

1. Recognize and Tell (Yourself) the Truth.

You have come to several realizations by now. You know what causes you to feel defensive, angry or offended and you also know that this is not the time to act - you will not be productive or effective. You have also become much more self-aware and realize that the upset emotions you are feeling is something you produced. It wasn't your boss who made you angry, but the story you told yourself about why he didn't invite you to the meeting. You may have quickly judged, for example, that he didn't want your input or chose your co-worker's presentation instead of your, etc. This is a common thing we do when others let us down—we leap to judgments and conclusions that escalate our emotions and make us less effective at confronting problems.

The first thing you need to do is review the facts. You were not invited. You don't know whether your attendance was necessary to the meeting. You don't know if your boss knew you were expecting to attend this meeting. You don't know if it was an oversight. He may have been called away and handed the baton to his colleague. Is your boss a rational, reasonable and decent person who did not intend to slight you in any way? Making this kind of analysis redirects your mind to the facts. You've concluded that your boss is a reasonable person who deserves your understanding and civility. Your approach will be matter of fact and his response will not be defensive. See examples below.

2. Assure others of your positive intentions.

This means creating safety. The fear that most people have when confronting is that they believe that the other person will become defensive. People don't become defensive because of what you're saying to them; they become defensive because of why they think you are saying it. *The problem is in the approach.* People need to feel a sense of safety. Help others feel safe by assuring them of your positive intentions. Show your respect for them in a way that is appropriate for you.

One way to do this is by asking permission before confronting: "I was wondering if we might talk about today's meeting. Is now a good time?" Then continue with "I was under the impression that I would be participating in this meeting. Was there some change in plan I was not aware of?"

3. State Facts, Not Interpretations.

Many people make mistakes in giving feedback by mixing their judgments or conclusions with facts. Sometimes people have mixed motives. They want to give helpful feedback. But they also want to express irritation and punish the other person for creating the problem. Strip away other motives entirely and focus on the facts.

Based on your conclusions and judgments, you might be tempted to say (but don't do it): "I was really upset you didn't tell me about the meeting. Why didn't you want me there?" Instead, try, "I may have misunderstood you the other day. Was I under the wrong impression when you requested me to have a presentation ready for today's meeting? I was expecting to be advised when the meeting was called and was wondering if I misunderstood about being asked to join."

4. Encourage Dialogue.

By this time, your emotions are in check. You have peeled away your judgments, and conclusions from the truth (the actual facts) and you initiated a conversation by intending to make it safe for the other person and by your willingness to share the facts. The other person is probably listening reasonably well at this point. This is the time to invite more dialogue. A good piece of advice is to end the conversation with a question that encourages open dialogue. A good question for many situations is, "Can we talk about what might have happened?"

You don't know how things will turn out. But if you continue to approach things in a safe and respectful way, sharing your opinions, you are likely to have a positive impact. And by encouraging others to openly dialogue with you, you will impact on both the quality and effectiveness of workplace relationships.

Inspired from letters to Joseph Grenny, coauthor of *Crucial Conversations*

3. COACH'S TIP # 6

Master the Inner Work of Confrontation

*"The more you listen to the voice within you,
the better you will hear what is sounding outside."
-- Dag Hammarskjöld*

Think about a recent situation or circumstance when you engaged in a conversation which was upsetting and where you felt things were left unresolved (and you're still thinking about it).

Use the following questions to help you reflect on your thoughts, feelings and actions. Spend a few minutes with each of these questions and write down your responses:

- What were your assumptions, judgments or beliefs about the other person, at the time of the event?
- What was motivating you at the time?
- What did you say or do that worked?
- What did you say or do that didn't work?
- What were you feeling at the time?

After you have spent a few minutes responding to each of the above questions, take a break and come back to the following questions:

- Is there anything else you could have done?
- What are some other modes of behavior and attitudes you could adopt to serve you better?
- Knowing what you know now, what will you do next time?

Writing it on paper or on the computer is a way to help your mind focus and give you an opportunity to express your thoughts and your feelings from a place of authentic self. You may reveal to yourself that things are not what they seem to be.

Have a Joyful Month



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Request Flo for your next event. In addition to being the founder of Thinking Well Consulting, Ms. Mauri is an Executive Coach and Educator at NYU, teaching Organizational Behavior, Emotionally Intelligent Leadership and Management Styles. She is certified in Conflict Resolution and Organization Development. Ms. Mauri specializes in assessment tools and self-awareness techniques for maximizing human potential. Are you getting in your own way toward advancing your true aspirations and talents? Are you experiencing challenges in your business relationships and want to breakthrough repetitive no-win cycles? Are you ready to define and lead with your strengths? A coach can help you take action to achieve your goals. Contact Flo today for a conversation.

Chart Your Change is your select source for inspiration, coaching tips and personal development. We share the very best of essays, research studies and success tools for taking your human potential to the top of Maslow's pyramid: self-actualization and transformation.

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