

Coaching Tips....Do's and Don't's on Supporting Decent Behavior

Laws break. Rules fail. But behavior rules. You've got to do the right thing because you can't legislate ethical behavior or create airtight rules for it. Doing the right thing means acting decently, responsibly and respectfully toward others, and encouraging them to do the same. I asked Liz Guthridge, a communication and leadership development consultant, to provide us with November's coaching tips related to doing the right thing.

"You need to recognize that many employees may be hoping to make a dash for greener pastures and a more supportive and ethical work environment when the job market turns," says Guthridge. "Take the challenge by giving them signs that you are committed to them and your organization." Here are some do's and don't's for exhibiting good communication skills during these turbulent times.

1. **Do reach out even when deadlines are tight.** We're living in paradoxical times. On the one hand, people are working on overload trying to meet multiple deadlines. On the other hand, they want to be personally involved in issues that affect them, and not give up their proxy to someone who may not act in their best interest. So it's important to take a few moments to interact and engage with people on both a personal and professional level even when everyone's complaining they're way too busy for it.
2. **Don't cut to the chase and leave out all the good parts.** When telling your staff and other employees what you or other leaders have decided or are planning to do next, be sure to provide them the context for your decisions. They'll get a deeper understanding of what's going on and you'll get more buy-in if you describe the situation and explain how you've connected the dots.
3. **Do recognize that flip flops are more than trendy footwear.** The behavior, not the shoes, can play a valuable role in business. Changing your mind on an issue can be a sign of strength, not weakness—especially when your colleagues and direct reports observe that you're listening to them and basing your change of mind on new data and knowledge.
4. **Don't get addicted to e-mail.** Yes, e-mail is a fast, consistent and all-reaching way to communicate, but it can turn into a crutch. It's an easy way to avoid talking to people face-to-face or over the phone. You need to talk with people every now and then to make sure you're on the same page and fully understand one another. A good rule of thumb is, if it takes more than 2 e-mails to get the point across – pick up the phone.
5. **Do respect the difference between personalization and privacy.** Another paradox in today's world is that people want and expect a high degree of personalization in their interactions with others. Yet they also want to feel safe and secure, and preserve their privacy to the extent possible. Because everyone defines their private space differently, it's useful to not make assumptions. Clarify ahead of time what might be openly shared in the public domain and what's off limits.

Liz Guthridge serves as a trusted advisor to her clients, helping them cut through the clutter and get them and their employees focused on things that matter. She not only keeps her clients out of trouble by minimizing their risks, but also helps them achieve their business goals. She specializes in using strategic communication in combination with leadership actions and organization design. Liz can be reached at liz.guthridge@connectconsultinggroup.com

Until next month, stay well and don't forget you can always write to let us know if you have any questions you would like answered in our monthly coaching tips.

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