



**The Blake Group**  
Organizational Consulting LLC

**More Than Consulting. Solutions.™**

## November 2011 Newsletter

### Improving Tolerance for and Skill in Handling Opposing Viewpoints

When you concentrate on getting the job done efficiently there is a tendency to frequently view those with whom you work as instruments for accomplishing something. You might be objectifying them and when there is a disagreement you might see them as a detriment to accomplishment.

To work more effectively with and through others it is important that they feel they can voice their suggestions and criticisms and that those comments receive your thoughtful consideration.

1. The next three times someone comes to you with an opposing viewpoint, hear them out stifling any impatience you may feel. Allow them to express themselves without thinking about any counterarguments that come to mind. Ask the person to fully explain their rationale behind their position. Then tell the person you will consider their comments and get back to them.
2. Sit down and write out:
  - a. Where you think the person is coming from, i.e., try to put yourself in the other person's place to determine what factors motivated their comments.
  - b. Three advantages of their proposal.
  - c. Three disadvantages of their proposal.
3. Consider the merits of the advantages and weigh them plus the benefits of encouraging the person's independent thinking and boosting their morale against the disadvantages.
4. Meet again with the person to review your listed advantages and disadvantages and to explain the rationale behind your final decision

Others will come to you more freely and frequently with their comments, suggestions and ideas when you master this technique.

### Become More Approachable

The task of directing others is made easier if they feel that they can freely come to you with problems.

1. Set aside and notify others of a specific time during the week when you will be available to discuss problems and concerns with them. Be realistic about the amount of time you are willing to devote to this. Be cautious not to promise more than you can deliver.
2. Develop the habit of inquiring about the well-being of employees that you supervise. Show your concern for them as people by demonstrating an interest in their lives that transcends job responsibilities.
3. If problems arise because employees fail to come to you for help, determine the reason behind their reluctance to seek your help. For example, in the past had you been overly critical of mistakes they had made? Had you failed to provide guidance when employees came to you about a problem instead of giving them the impression that this was a problem that would have worked out on their own?
4. For each situation write out how you could have acted differently to avoid the problem.
5. Contact – in person or by phone – the person and indicate that you recognize that your own behavior was to some extent responsible for their failure to consult you. Indicate how you feel you could have acted and ask the person if that behavior on your part would have caused them to consult you. Urge the person to talk to you about such issues in the future. Encourage them to let you know that when they feel that some behavior of yours is discouraging them from consulting you.
6. When serious problems arise in the future, follow this process

Employees will more freely and frequently consult you in the future if you successfully carry this out. You will find that the number of such problems will diminish.

### Take a Personal Interest in Employees

Informal one-to-one chats over a period of time can strengthen your relationship with employees and even increase motivation and performance. Over the next 3 months:

1. Spend more time than you normally would in informal interaction with employees.
2. Chat briefly with people before getting down to the day's business.
3. Be willing to talk about personal problems if they bring them up during the course of a conversation. However, your main role is to listen rather than give advice.
4. Lunch occasionally with employees and discuss subjects of mutual interest other than business.
5. Have at least one informal interview with each of your employees during the 3-month period. During these interviews, ask about their interests and aspirations. In general, try to get them to open up about themselves.

If these informal chats have accomplished their purpose, you should feel on friendlier terms with employees. You should note more times where employees are willing to seek your advice regarding personal or job related problems because of the greater interest you are showing in them as people.

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