

Stop Striving; Instead, Help Others Win

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2017, distributed on Friday, April 14, 2017

You've worked hard to get to where you are. Your competence is evident. People recognize your desire to serve. You've kept promises and exceeded expectations. In the eyes of many, you've arrived. Yet you have a lot more living to do! With so many more aspirations, you keep striving.

WAIT! HOLD ON A MINUTE! The most highly esteemed executive coach in America today, Marshall Goldsmith, suggests that you take a fresh look at what you're doing. Continuing to behave habitually may be a quite poor strategy! You are likely creating inadvertent obstacles for those you influence.

About a third of Goldsmith's book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* is devoted to offering you an interesting paradigm shift. Perhaps, at this stage in your life, your efforts to prove yourself, to add value, to contribute--all good things--may now be having unintended negative effects on others.

Goldsmith identifies twenty behaviors that are likely inhibiting your further success and certainly serving as an obstruction to the success of your colleagues and direct reports.

In a short article, I can't fully describe each of the twenty habitual behaviors. I can, however, intrigue you with the concept such that you want to learn more. You can obtain the book, of course, or look up the abundance of free written materials and videos Goldsmith has placed on the internet.

Perhaps a more valuable objective I can accomplish with this article is to give you a convenient checklist once you are familiar with the objectionable behaviors. That's how I intend to use it.

None of us do all of these, and certainly not all the time. However, all of us are guilty of one or more of these occasionally. This article would be good to keep handy for periodic referral. Here goes.

Winning too much. When it's important, you want to win. When the situation is really not worth your energy and effort, you still want to win! Your job at this stage of your life is to help others win!

Adding value. You want to support and encourage. However, when someone offers an idea and you add what you think genuinely enhances the concept, you may also have diminished the energy of the person who "owned" the original idea. Will it be executed now as rigorously? Perhaps not.

Portraying how smart you are. Any variation of "Yes, I already know that" applies here. Sadly, you do it far too often. Practice simply saying "Thank you" instead.

Passing judgment on others' ideas. It's much better to simply say, "Thank you--you've given me something to think about." (You may need to study this one and actually try it before you buy into it!)

Making destructive comments. Sarcasm (and anything close to it), no matter what the intent, has the effect of hurting others. The other person hears, "You are inadequate. I'm better than you."

Speaking when angry. Anger is a powerful emotion. You can't be logical when the emotional portion of your brain is engaged. Further, anger is rarely caused by something "out there." Anger is your reaction to what's happened "out there." You generated the anger responsively. Simply say nothing until the anger has passed. Easy? No. Healthier than damaging the relationship? Absolutely.

Starting with "no," "but," or "however." Whatever your intent, the other person hears some variation of "You are wrong." You may hastily retort, "But other people use those words all the time!" (Go back and read the previous sentence. Do you realize what "But" means in your response?)

Negative response to ideas. Your cautionary advice is probably a desire to prevent pain in the execution phase. Too often, however, you come across as a self-appointed judge who presumes superior knowledge. If the idea really won't work, that will become evident on its own soon enough.

Withholding information. Examples are failure to invite someone to a meeting or not including someone on an e-mail distribution list. You do this far more often unconsciously than you do willfully. The solution is simple. Make a choice to intentionally empower people. Raise it in your priorities.

Failing to give proper recognition. This includes both public recognition and private appreciation for the effort. This oversight is most noticed by the person who set aside other potential opportunities to focus his or her energy. The oversight is likely to be remembered for a long time!

Claiming credit you don't deserve. This one's guaranteed to evoke irritation in your colleagues and direct reports. Other people work hard to make you look good. Reciprocate. Go out of your way to be a credit philanthropist, giving your colleagues and direct reports recognition (see item above).

Clinging to the past. Looking backwards for answers as to why you behave as you do today will only create understanding. It won't change your future. Making new choices today can do that.

Playing favorites. Unfortunately, you have a tendency to favor those who favor you. Become aware of this tendency by ranking your direct reports in three categories: how much each likes you, the level of contribution to internal and external customers, and how much personal recognition you give to each. Then look at the correlation of the first and third as compared to the second and third.

Making excuses. Nobody wants to hear them. When you make a mistake, admit it and apologize. Go to my website's "Article Archives" page and read "How Comfortable Are You with Apologizing?"

Refusing to express regret. Apology is better. Apology is very powerful. Want to rebuild a damaged relationship? Go to my website and read "Why Can't I Be Forgiven without an Apology."

Not listening. Is there anything ruder? Yet if you are competent and forward-thinking, it's unlikely that those less experienced will tell you anything you haven't already considered. They will, instead, tell you what has recently become evident to them. You'd like to inspire your direct reports to continue seeking future insights, right? Giving them your undivided attention, acknowledging their efforts, and asking how you can support their subsequent progress usually works superbly!

Failing to express gratitude. It's only two monosyllabic words: "Thank you." Practice them until you are comfortable. Then practice every time you receive a compliment or a complaint. Complaint? Yep, if someone has the guts to give you some negative feedback, he or she deserves a big "Thank you!"

Punishing the messenger. This is usually misdirected anger. You may not be happy with what you just learned, but you likely needed to hear it. Here's another opportunity to simply say, "Thank you!"

Passing the buck. No one wants to hear your excuses. Accepting responsibility for your (and your organization's) mistakes makes a bigger impression than how you celebrate your successes.

An excessive need to be "me." "That's just the way I am" is a misguided justification which really turns off members of your team. If you insist on not changing, there's no way you can improve.

Your motives are probably honorable, and your habits are deeply ingrained. However, the effect of your actions usurps the commitment of the very people you want to support. Become more aware.

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