

Sharpening Your **EDGE** Volume 3 - Issue 5



LEADING BY EXAMPLE WITH THE EDGE?

Our colleagues, customers and direct reports follow our lead in many ways. If we are e-mailing at 10 pm on Saturday night, we encourage them to e-mail then as well. If we are frantically reacting to the new challenges we face, they frantically react too. If we are short and curt with vendors or colleagues, they learn to be short and curt.

I was coaching the COO of a transportation company, Fred, and we had decided to work late that evening. I excused myself for a brief break, and as I was walking down the hall I saw people popping their heads out of their offices like gophers in a hole. After the 4th person, I inquired what they were doing and was told that they felt like they couldn't leave until Fred did because he might need something else from them. Fred had no idea that his team was waiting on him to leave. They were following his example; when he worked late, they worked late.

Many of us blame the "culture" of our fast-paced companies for the bad work habits that we've picked up – sitting in our e-mail inboxes, being in constant reactive mode, multi-tasking instead of focusing and answering e-mails at all hours of the day and night. Many of us have forgotten that we are the culture of our company, and we can help change that culture one person at a time. Even if we aren't in a leadership position, we can lead by example by starting with positive changes for ourselves.

You can lead by example with something as simple as using effective e-mail etiquette, such as using effective e-mail subject lines (Action, FYI, FYI/Delete) and writing an e-mail so a decision can be made in 10 seconds. People tend to follow what works. Often, one person on a team starts using these standards and it spreads quickly throughout the team.

by Example?

Which of these other EDGE best practices could you implement today to help lead your team in a more positive, proactive direction?

- **Reduce interruptions by using the ..Team and ..Manager's Name categories.** You can dramatically reduce the number of "people" interruptions by using these two categories to park items that you need to discuss with someone, but aren't urgent in nature. This allows you to address a group of items all at once instead of as they come up. When everyone on a team uses these categories effectively, your entire team becomes much more proactive and has far fewer interruptions.
- **Delegate with confidence using the ..Waiting For category.** Tracking the items you have given to others in your ..Waiting For category so that you can feel confident that they will be completed on time and that you won't drop the ball. Again, when everyone on a team uses this category, the entire team begins working more collaboratively and cohesively.
- **Keep your head clear by using the Mind Sweep exercise.** Take a few minutes each day to capture all those incomplete items you have been carrying around in your head and put them in the Task or To Do section of your e-mail software. Carrying those things in your head causes major distraction and keeps you from focusing on what's in front of you. It's also very distracting when you are talking to a staff or team member and their brains are somewhere else.
- **Begin your day deliberately.** Give yourself a chance to warm-up each day rather than rushing in and immediately starting with your e-mail. Review your Calendar and ACTIONS lists to get your bearings on the commitments you've made already for the day.
- **Create boundaries for when you are going to work and when you aren't.** Set a goal time for you to leave the office each day and do your best to keep it. Minimize the amount of time you spend sending e-mails or checking your Blackberry or PDA when you are out of the office. You need the downtime and so does your team.

As you implement these best practices, your goal is to achieve that state of relaxed control – you know what you need to do, when you need to do it and feel confident that you are working on the right thing at the right time. Not only will you feel better about how you are working, but you can help create a more proactive, focused, relaxed environment for your entire team –



one small change at a time.

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