
Dealing with People

*M.V. Sastry **

Introduction

Interaction between you and others is a two way street. You react to a person : the person reacts to you. We may not be able to control other people's behaviour directly, but, by learning how to manage our own behaviour and developing techniques for communicating effectively, we can influence other people in a positive way. We can turn their (and our own) difficult behaviour into civilised and constructive behaviour. An attempt has been made to present here some thoughts in this regard.

Concentrate on the Problem

Learning to deal with difficult people involves learning how to manage your side of a two way transaction. When a client howls, the correct approach is to concentrate on the client's problem, rather than on your own feelings, in the following ways :

- Do not pass the buck, saying you are not responsible, or defend your company.
- Take notes while the person is talking.
- Respond by paraphrasing to be sure that you understand the person's problem.
- Ask questions.

Handling Hurt

When someone says something that hurts you, learn to:

- Immediately identify that you are hurt
- Right away, discuss your feelings with the person who caused the upset.

Healing with Negative Emotions

It is easy to respond to situations with emotions rather than logic, but responding logically helps us deal constructively with difficult circumstances.

Gain some insight into the nature of the difficulty. Analyse the situation, your feelings and your behaviour. Utilising this, take charge of your reactions instead of letting your instincts control you.

To win Arguments

- State what you want clearly.
- Ask for time to think things over (This allows both of you to calm down)
- Take a deep breath (to increase your oxygen intake so that you can analyse your situation more clearly)
- Do not be rash. Think whether you should give in a little so that you can both win.
- Listen carefully. Make sure that the other person knows you are listening. Wait until the other person is willing to listen to you.
- Agree to disagree.

To be Constructive

- When criticizing others, suggest ways to improve the person's behaviour
- Apologise if you hurt someone.

Forgive others for injuries done to you.

Qualities of a Good Listener

- Let others finish what they are saying with

** M.V. Sastry*

Retd. DG(RD), MoST

The Author is Recipient of 'Shri Ram Award', 'Rashtriya Gaurav Award' and 'Certificate of Excellence'.

out interrupting them

- Ask questions if they are confused
- Pay attention to what others are saying and show them that you are paying attention by maintaining comfortable eye contact
- Remain open-minded, ready to revise your opinions
- Use feedback and paraphrasing skills
- Pay attention to the speaker's body language
- Don't tune out inappropriately when others are speaking.

Customer Service

- Train employees to know about the organization, products/ services offered, problems likely to arise, how they can help clients most effectively
- To find out what customers want, expect and need (by asking questions)
- Make clients feel that they are important
- Extending courtesy and prompt service
- Acknowledge his presence, apologize for unintentional delay in attending to him due to long queue, thank him for his patience
- Do not pass the buck, admit if there is a mistake, empathise with the person, and take steps to correct the problem.

Create a favourable first impression for your firm when a phone call is received (Be polite and pleasant. Help the caller achieve the purpose)

The art of Being Supervised

This consists of being able to accept suggestions that will help you improve your performance. When your supervisor criticizes you, keep the following in view:

- Control your thoughts and behaviour
- Don't respond angrily. Instead, listen carefully to the comments
- Ask for specifics if the criticism is vague
- Use the technique of paraphrasing to confirm your understanding of the problem
- If the criticism is valid, apologize and let your supervisor know what steps you will take to correct the behaviour or the problem (Don't let the criticism overwhelm you. Decide that you won't make the same mistake again)

- Don't climb into a shell (work to rule or give poor performance)

To make Meetings Effective

- Circulate agenda with time limits well before the meetings.
- During the meeting, delegate responsibility as required
- Set firm deadlines for each commitment.
- At the end of the meeting, ask each individual to confirm that he or she understands the task.
- Follow up with written minutes.

To overcome Objections to Change

- Write a summary of the existing method
- Determine the advantages and disadvantages of this method
- Write a summary of the new method
- Determine the advantages and disadvantages of the new method
- Anticipate the objections others will raise and decide what you will say to defend your new idea.

To Handle Problems with those in Power

- Determine the problem
- Examine relationships
- Determine the cost of the problem behaviour
- Prepare for the confrontation
- Rehearse thoroughly
- Find a solution
- Agree on a plan of action
- Obtain a commitment

Follow up with the person

To make the best of a bad Situation

- Remain calm (Don't argue/ accuse)
- Use your listening skills to check your understanding
- Be firm (Do not let yourself be pushed beyond limit)
- Be persistent and consistent in your response
- Believe in yourself and your ability to deal with others
- Look for ways to lessen your exposure to the behaviour, or to reduce the causes of the behaviour.

Conclusion

Learning the skills to handle different types of people and difficult situations will help a person to improve his relationships with all. Your people skills will help you to control your moods and keep cool whatever may be the circumstances. Instead of becoming defensive when dealing with an irate customer, you will concentrate on solving the client's problem. In the end, both of you will be winners. Supervisors should set an example to their people with their own behaviour. They should delegate and train their staff. Failure to groom staff to succeed them may result in their being overlooked themselves when a more responsible position is being filled. Appreciate a job well done. Praise every improvement in your people, even if it is small. Be lavish in praise but polite and soft in criticism with an intention to correct the other person. Never criticize/ reprimand anyone in front of others. Be careful in talking as a spoken word

cannot be taken back. Conduct yourself in a way that is appropriate to the time, situation and context without hurting the other person or getting yourself hurt. Speak the truth, speak what is appealing to the other person, do not speak that truth which is not appealing (in that case it is better to keep quiet). If the motives are good, the results will also be good. Observing good manners and proper etiquette, greeting everyone with a smile, addressing people by their names, restraint, empathetic listening, facing any situation in an unperturbed and balanced way-such qualities make interactions pleasant and everlasting. Fairness, modesty, patience, compassion and love are virtues to be cultivated. Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you. The products of better mutual understanding of ideas and feelings are harmony and improved team work. By rising above the personal level, looking at the larger interest, and by helping / serving others, one can maintain meaningful relationships with all, and lead a fulfilling life.