

Let's Talk About Different Perspectives

Syble Solomon | April 17, 2007

Let's talk about getting what you want by looking at a situation through the eyes of the other person. Generally when people ask for changes in their job or interview for a new job, they focus on their own strengths. By reframing their comments to reflect the other person's perspective, their chances of success increases. Here are two examples:

Jean's story: Jean applied to be the director of a large, well established non-profit agency. Based on her research of the organization, she was confident that her ability to work with people was just what they needed to address their staffing issues and her visionary ideas were a perfect fit for moving them into the future.

Her initial reaction to the rejection letter was that she was discriminated against by the "good ol' boy" system. That may be, but as we talked it became clear that Jean was so committed to impressing them with her strengths that she didn't really listen to their questions and understand their perspective to answer accordingly.

When asked about her fundraising approach she focused on her very inclusive, personable style of talking with people — from chance meetings in the supermarket to formal events in the community. She assumed her resume said enough about her successful track record and never considered that they were looking for specifics about her fundraising strategies. For example, she failed to explain how she successfully developed staff to work with donors or that she understood the uniqueness of this particular agency and community. In the end they liked her style, but felt she lacked substance.

In addition, when they asked questions regarding the transition from smaller agencies to taking over this much larger organization, they were looking for clear indications that she understood some of the challenges she would face. They wanted concrete examples of her adaptability, her ability to take on a much broader scope of responsibilities and to work collaboratively with a wider range of people. She didn't stop to ask them to clarify their requests, and continued to explain how she would focus on developing a more motivated, coordinated staff that would be able to work more effectively to reach the goals. By not taking the time to understand their perspective and answer accordingly, she appeared as someone who would be good at organizing the day-to-day structure, but lacked the leadership to take the organization forward.

Tracey's Story: Tracey was working full time at a continuing care community that provided nursing and assisted care for elderly adults. She loved her job but was tired and found all the administrative responsibilities frustrating. She wanted to work three days a week and only do the family support part of her job. She knew every previous request for part-time hours had been rejected and was planning to just quit.

We talked about the benefits and drawbacks from her boss's perspective and she agreed to try a new approach before giving notice.

In the end, she never came close to saying "I want to work part-time and get rid of my administrative responsibilities." Instead, she said, "Our population has dramatically changed the past two years. Our residents have more complex medical and care needs and our population has increased 15 percent. I know you and the board have considered how we can continue to provide the same quality of family support as we have in the past and keep our expenses down. Since the administrative responsibilities are also expanding for both of us with these changes I thought that if I limited my work to three days a week and only focused on family support, you could redefine my position to include most of my administration responsibilities and take some of yours. Then, I would

also be available to help the staff when there are emergencies on the weekends and by paying me pro-rated benefits, the cost of the additional position would be minimized."

To her amazement, her boss agreed. Everything Jean suggested made sense, met his needs and addressed multiple issues he was facing. As a bonus, there was someone on staff who was qualified for that redefined administrative job and was interested in new career opportunities so it could be a fairly easy transition.

Anytime you want something, take the time to really put yourself in the other person's shoes and look at it through his or her eyes. From someone else's perspective, how can your proposal bring benefits, address needs, allay fears and make his or her life easier? That small difference in the way you present your information or request may make the difference of getting what you want.



About Syble Solomon

Syble Solomon is an eclectic, innovative professional speaker and author. After 30 years of being the trailing spouse who had to adapt to frequent relocations, she has combined her previous experience in education, business and gerontology to promote personal responsibility for creating a satisfying and secure life. As an executive coach for the past ten years, she has worked with leaders in the military, Fortune 500 corporations, and private and public organizations. She is the creator of Money Habitudes? the deck of cards that helps people identify how their hidden habits and attitudes about money can support and sabotage their life and financial goals. Visit www.moneyhabitudes.com for more information.

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