



# The Human Factor

Releasing the Power of Your People



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## Highlight Your 2008 Successes!

*Appreciate Your Past Accomplishments  
– Create a Great Year!*

These first few months of the year are filled with good wishes. We “wish” ourselves and each other the best of the New Year, but we can do more than just wishing. We can actively create it - to become our best year in some time.

One way we can accelerate our New Year’s success is to tap into the powerful theory of “Appreciative Inquiry” (or AI as it is often called). A short explanation of this theory is that “you get MORE of whatever it is you PAY ATTENTION TO.” Through reflecting on what has proven to be effective and successful in your life and work, you build on the best parts to create more of what you most value.

Are you ready to give yourself a personalized gift and create this year from a powerful stance? Then take time to pave the way to a successful future by appreciating your past accomplishments.

Complete the exercise on the next page and you will begin the process of actively creating your successes this year.

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*Are You Building on Your 2008 Successes?*

## Dealing with Difficult People

We have all heard incredible tales from time to time of having to deal with difficult people in the workplace. As we listen to the antics of some, we also find that we may have a story or two to tell of our own challenging experience or difficult conversation with a seemingly unfair colleague.

How many times have we been disappointed or aggravated by a difficult colleague? Although the stories may vary, they all tell the tale of an office mate or a manager who just doesn’t “get it” or “play well with others.” More often than not, when challenged or disappointed by those we spend most of our waking hours with - we often choose to retreat rather than addressing the unprofessional behavior. And although it is best to take the “high road”, there are consequences to doing nothing at all.

Ironically, employees and managers (at all levels) will make deadlines, take on additional responsibilities and jump into any project as a great leader and team player. But when it comes to confronting a difficult employee or manager, they will either ignore the situation completely or more dangerously, go behind the scenes and broadcast the shortcomings of another individual and their own personal misgivings about them in hopes that someone will somehow catch wind and solve the problem and/or situation for them.

Unfortunately, this approach usually backfires and leaves the “informant” with a poor reputation. It takes an incredible amount of patience when confronting any person, or situation for that matter, that makes us feel uncomfortable. Many times we have heard the expression “use a cool head” when voicing dissatisfaction or displeasure with another person.

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Fill in your own unique responses to the following questions, inspired by the new book, *Appreciative Coaching – A Positive Process for Change* by authors Sara Orem, Jacqueline Binkert, & Ann Clancy (Publisher: Jossey-Bass Business and Management 2007):



1. Describe your three greatest accomplishments in your life/work from 2008:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What about each of these accomplishments was most valuable to you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How was your life enhanced as a result of these accomplishments?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. How can you apply what you gained and/or learned from these accomplishments to create more of what you value this year?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. From your answers to the previous question, what specifically are you committed to take action on, and by when?

\_\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_

Now, take a peek into your increasingly bright future. Imagine yourself one year from now, and consider these questions:



Continued on next column –

6. Describe your three greatest accomplishments in your life/work from 2009 in SPECIFIC DETAILS (what, where, when):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. How did each of these accomplishments contribute to increasing your life/work success?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Throughout the months ahead, remember to focus on what is meaningful to you to create more of it in your life. *Here's to Discovering, Dreaming and Designing your Great Year!*

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## Troubleshooting a Stagnant Meeting

Be ready to propel a meeting forward when it hits trouble spots. Here are three classic meeting problems and how to solve them:

- ✓ Problem: “*We always peter out.*” Solution: End the meeting on a high note. If 17 minutes into the meeting, you reach the climax of the gathering, stop the meeting there. That way everyone walks out revved up – and more productive.
- ✓ Problem: “*Everyone’s bored out of their minds.*” Solution: Make attendees laugh. Here’s a trick from Sheldon Arora, CEO of esoftsolutions in Plano, Texas: The last person into the room at the monthly companywide meeting has to tell a joke. It loosens up the room and fills the seats on time.
- ✓ Problem: “*No one retains a thing.*” Solution: Do a five-minute recap at the end. You want everyone to leave knowing exactly what they’re supposed to do. Clarify potential outcomes, outline next steps and make assignments.

– Adapted from *Escape From Meeting Hell*, Patrick J. Sauer, Inc., [www.inc.com](http://www.inc.com)



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But many of us do not take this advice. Emotion tends to push people to react too quickly and not take the time to sort through what is really bothering them most. The key to effective communication is timing. How many times have we all said after a heated exchange, “I should have said this or not said that?” When we take the time to analyze the problem, we are in essence, formulating a more effective plan of action and conversation. And sometimes, after thinking about the outcome and consequences of such an exchange, we find the problem is not so monumental.

Another consideration when “taking on” the difficult colleague is the organization’s unwritten rules and values. Is this issue significant enough to warrant upper level support? Has this issue surfaced before? If yes, what was the outcome – for both the confronter and confronted? You may also want to discuss the pros and cons of confronting the problem with your mentor before moving forward.



There are career enhancing and career sabotaging methods to effectively deal with and work with the difficult people. And although the difficult Do’s are much more “difficult” to execute, they are well worth it over the long haul.

### Difficult Do’s

- Acknowledge that you are in fact dealing with a difficult coworker and that things will not get better if ignored.
- Approach the individual in a professional manner and make an effort to confront the “right” problem.
- Carefully weigh the consequences with an outside-unbiased party (mentor) before addressing the problem.
- If the situation cannot seem to be resolved, seek the council of a supervisor and explain your concerns. When there is still no progress, request a mediation session with your supervisor and a human resource professional. This will ensure documentation of your issues, which will prove to be helpful down the road.

### Difficult Don’ts

- Don’t speak ill of the difficult colleague around the water cooler or anywhere else. Those who hear you may be wondering what you are saying about them.
- Do not become emotional when confronting the difficult colleague. This approach will always make you appear to be irrational.
- Don’t downplay the cost of not speaking up when you should.

And remember, there is no reason to have to search for another job or a new career because of one challenging individual. By learning how to deal with the situation rationally and professionally, you only enhance your own reputation.

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# ONE MINUTE IDEAS

## Where is Your Comfort Zone?

Does the following cartoon speak to you?



## The Choice Question

Are you making choices because they are in your comfort zone or are you making choices to take you where you need and desire to go?

## Success

“Success tends to go not to the person who is error-free, because he also tends to be risk-averse. Rather it goes to the person who recognizes that life is pretty much a percentage business. It isn’t making mistakes that’s critical, it’s correcting them and getting on with the principal task.”

– Donald Rumsfeld

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## Teach Your Employees' Communication Basics

Sharpen communication between you and your staff members by following these guidelines:

- ✓ **Really listen; don't "Wait to Talk."** When employees are speaking, focus on what they're saying and try to understand their complete meaning. Don't let your attention wander because you're thinking about how you'll respond.
- ✓ **Be concise. Don't monopolize the conversation.** Get to the point and give employees the chance to share their ideas.
- ✓ **Keep an open mind. Reserve judgment.** Consider all points of view and possibilities before you respond.
- ✓ **Show respect.** Convey your commitment to listening through your body language as well as through your silence. Don't slouch, fiddle with papers or carry on any side conversations.
- ✓ **Seek and confirm understanding.** When you're not sure exactly what someone means, ask for clarification. Then, to confirm that you understood, summarize what you heard.
- ✓ **Appreciate more than one right answer.** Each employee brings a different perspective to the discussion. Accept that problems can have more than one solution.



Reprint permission from: *Manager's Edge*, Janelle Brittain, Oakhill Press.

## A Competitive Edge for College Students

Do you have a child in college right now, or are your children heading there in the next couple of years?

**College is stressful on a number of fronts for both parents and student:**

- *Did we choose the right school?*
- *Can we afford the tuition?*
- *Is my child on the four-year plan, or are we going to have to deal with a longer timeframe? (By the way, a fellow coach tells me the average is now 6 years!)*
- *Is my son or daughter prepared for the challenges associated with living so far away from their family support system?*
- *Are their study habits adequate for them to be successful in school?*
- *Are they going to be able to stay focused, even when the pull of college social life is strong?*
- *Do they know what resources to draw upon to select the best classes to meet their educational goals?*
- *Will they be able to get good internships during college, and a good job when they graduate?*

One emerging trend for parents to help ensure college success is to provide a coach for their child. The coach is a trained adult whose only goal is to help the student be successful. They help the student define their priorities and goals, and they assist the student in finding the resources they need to make the most of their college experience. They serve as adult sounding board, cheerleader, and advisor.

The coach is the parent's ally helping the college student make the transition from home to school, from dependent to independent. And since they're not a parent and not an educator they are able to talk with the child adult to adult, free of the agenda or judgment that can create communication barriers or unnecessary resistance.

Coaching for students can be effective from tenth grade all the way through college. Pre-college coaching can help a student make an appropriate selection for college or technical school, and coaching during college can provide a support system to maximize the return on your (and their) investment in their education.

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*For a free, no obligation discussion  
about how this works, and what  
results you can expect.*

