

Conquer Complaining & Blaming

Are you a smellfungus?

What's that you say? Never heard of a smellfungus? According to Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (fifth edition), it is ...

Smellfungus noun. [Sterne's name for Smollett, with ref. to the carping tone of Smollett's *Travels through France and Italy* (1766).] A discontented person; a grumbler, a fault-finder.

You couldn't ask for a more perfect word to describe those irritating people who delight in complaining and blaming.

Humor me for a minute while I address those people who choose to grouse and kvetch about a problem rather than rolling up their sleeves and finding a win-win solution. In the 25 years I've been helping to improve organizational and individual effectiveness, I've not encountered a nastier demon than complaining and blaming. It destroys morale, frustrates leaders and hurts productivity.

"It's just not fair! I've worked here for 18 years and management refuses to change the policy. It really rubs me raw. I've told them – over and over again – the policy isn't fair. Other than complaining about the policy what else can I do? Nothing. It's just not fair."

Smellfungus!

Personally, I find bellyaching and finger-pointing to be one of the most frustrating work-related problems. There you are, innocently minding your own business and, before you know it, some Moaning Minnie has hijacked you and you're careening helplessly along her tale of woe.

"It's not my fault my schedule isn't full. It's management's fault. They hire really squirrely people to run the front desk. My clients complain about the front desk jerks all the time. It's not my fault those jerks are lazy and incompetent. No wonder my schedule isn't full!"

Yada...Yada...Yada...

Thanks for letting me vent. I feel better. What were we talking about? Oh, yes. Conquering complaining and blaming.

A Simple Matter of Personal Choice

When you encounter a situation you don't like, you have two choices:

1. Exercise your personal power to be a part of the solution; or
2. Choose to be powerless and become a helpless victim of circumstances.

When you exercise your personal power to be a part of the solution, you don't complain or blame. You realize complaining and blaming accomplishes nothing of substance. You accept responsibility for your own happiness and for taking action to make the situation better. You focus on your role in improving things. You ask, "What positive change can I make?"

When you complain and blame you are choosing to be powerless. You prefer to be a helpless victim of circumstances with no

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 26)

power in the workplace

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

accountability or responsibility for the situation. You “let off steam” by griping about injustices and indignantly pointing an accusing finger at other people. You righteously wait for other people to take action to make the situation better. “After all,” you justify, “I didn’t cause the problem. It’s not my fault.” You expect other people to shoulder the responsibility for your happiness or unhappiness.

It feels good to complain and blame but the good feelings are just temporary. Like a drug addict, it takes more and more complaining and blaming to feel good.

3 Steps to Stop Your Complaining & Blaming

1. NAME YOUR FEELINGS. Rather than whining about an injustice or trying to assign blame, put a label on what you are feeling. Does the situation make you angry, sad, confused or scared? “When my boss asks why my financial report isn’t finished, it scares me. I’m afraid I may lose my job.”

2. ASK YOURSELF: “WHAT ROLE DO I PLAY IN THIS SITUATION?” Examine yourself first. If you care enough to complain or blame, your actions or inactions play some role in creating and solving the problem. You may need to ask for help to see your role. It’s hard to read the label when you’re inside the bottle. “What am I doing or not doing that causes me to run out of time during the work day?”

3. IDENTIFY ALL OF YOUR OPTIONS FOR ACTION – EVEN IF YOU DON’T LIKE THEM.

Complaining (or blaming) is just one of the possible actions you can take in response to the situation. What are the others? What can you do to be a part of the solution? “To help me better manage my time, don’t be afraid to delegate tasks to others on my staff.”

3 Steps for Leaders to Stop Employee Complaining & Blaming

1. DON’T ARGUE AGAINST THE COMPLAINT. If we disagree with the complainer or blamer, our natural tendency is to argue the complaint or placing of blame. A complainer feeds on opposition and anger because it reinforces him as the helpless victim. Your argument simply becomes more evidence to support his complaint. Ignore the complaint or blaming behavior and stay focused on the solution.

2. ASK THE COMPLAINER FOR HIS SOLUTIONS. What actions – other than complaining – can the complainer take to change the situation for the better? This request requires the complainer to assume some personal responsibility and power for resolving the situation. If possible, get him to identify at least three possible solutions. If he persists in insisting there is nothing he can do to help resolve the situation, offer one suggestion on how he can play a role in solving the problem. Then ask him, again, to identify other actions he could take to be a part of the solution. When complaining and blaming is deeply ingrained in someone, he may need some help to identify other possible actions.

3. HOLD THE PERSON ACCOUNTABLE FOR BEING A PART OF THE SOLUTION. If you don’t expect him to be a part of the solution, you are teaching him he can shirk his accountability by complaining and blaming. Don’t enable the destructive behavior. ■



RESOURCE FINDER

For more insight into Kay Cannon’s Power in the Workplace topic, view a copy of the Aug. 22-23 Knowledge Network report on www.experienceispa.com; click on Events then go to Knowledge Networks.



KAY CANNON helps people master the art of enlightened leadership, create joyful prosperity and unleash spiritual passion and purpose. She can be reached at kcannon@diamondingenuity.com. To learn more about mastering the art of enlightened leadership, browse the library of free articles, and discover the amazing secrets behind what makes people do what they do, visit www.diamondingenuity.com.