



Difficult people? Be part of the solution

The economic news this year has been fraught with disappointment, to say the least. U.S. unemployment figures have skyrocketed, consumer confidence has seesawed and several “mainstay” businesses have gone bust. In our own industry there have been cutbacks and project postponements.

All of this bad news and uncertainty causes an angst that is hard to avoid. We all know things will improve but, meanwhile, the anxiety seems to be spurring some negative behavior in the workplace. This can inhibit workers’ ability to interact effectively on a project, so I would like to share with you why and how we are adding exercises to our “Fundamentals of Turnaround Management” training to help improve one-on-one communication and interaction during a project.

Everyone is under more pressure, not just to retain their job but also to take on additional responsibilities due to cutbacks. We are expected to be more productive than ever. So it’s no surprise that I’ve been hearing stories about “difficult people” — instances where a simple request or ongoing relationship becomes unusually tense.

Suddenly it seems there is more conflict than conversation. These instances can derail time-sensitive projects such as turnarounds, which are stressful even under the best of circumstances. We need to set our egos aside and put the project first. There are ways to help others help us.

Situations like this are not new or unique to our industry, but it is time that more of us learn to deal with them effectively.

One scenario

Imagine that you are a mechanical planner and you have just been assigned to plan a job with an expert in a specialized discipline. You’re a typical mechanical planner who is strong in piping and fixed equipment and you have strong skills in working with people. You locate the subject matter expert, introduce yourself and explain to him, “I’m here to develop job plans for ...” He stops you mid-sentence and says, “I’m really busy right now and through the end of the week. The manuals and system information are on the shelf over there. Look through those and get what you need.” Wham, he walks away and is on to another task.

Put it into perspective

Understand that high level experts are under a great deal of pressure and have multiple demands on their time, especially since the industry has cut back on staff. They are valuable people and they have got to manage their interactions by being efficient. To achieve this efficiency they keep conversations brief and to the point. It is a mistake to interpret them as being difficult to work with. Here’s how to handle the situation.

Affirm their expertise

Tell them you need their help since they are the experts in this area. Avoid presenting yourself as an expert in their field. Do not challenge their expertise because it is likely that it is you who will be perceived as being the difficult one.

Be prepared

Respect their time and knowledge by being prepared with all materials you may need. Be sure to have the work scope, drawings, etc. and any job walk information that you’ve gathered.

Facilitate the process

Make it easy for them to help you. Explain how you’re going to work with them, how you can use their time effectively and how you plan to use the information they provide. Explain the overall process; describe each step and what they can expect from you. Do this at each meeting making sure you stay on-task and respect their time.

Repeat the process for the right result

You can’t force coworkers to always agree with the result you’ve come up with nor do you want that for your project. And don’t agree to a faulty premise simply to move on from working with a difficult person — that only results in future problems. Stay focused, don’t take things personally and help others help you; after all, the goal is a successful project.

For more information, contact The Turnaround Management Company at (281) 461-9340, e-mail sales@tamanagement.com or visit www.tamanagement.com.



RSC
Equipment Rental

Get Total Control Of Your Equipment Costs

Total Control®, RSC Equipment Rental’s unique web-based management system can help save companies time and money.

With The Total Control® Software You Can:

- > Access fleet activities, 24/7
- > Locate specific units
- > Monitor usage/hours
- > Arrange rentals and deliveries
- > Track charges
- > Review date and time of equipment requests, deliveries and off rent
- > Display availability of your fleet
- > And much more!

For more information about Total Control from RSC, visit RSCrental.com or call 800.222.7777.

DELIVERING.
Total Control

RSCrental.com • 800.222.7777

2009 © RSC Equipment Rental, Inc. All Rights Reserved.