THE LEADING WORD.
THE NYMAN GROUP

Summer 2001

Case Study

By Julie Liedman

Conflict might be a natural part of human interaction, but it can distract workers, thwart productivity and decrease morale. That's why the Philadelphia Streets Department has paved the way for The Nyman Group to teach its workers conflict resolution skills. The training has helped management understand the workers' issues, too.

As Commissioner of the Philadelphia Streets Department, Larry Moy vowed to make his department a perpetual learning environment. "When I came in eight years ago," he says, "the department was suffering from a poor image because of poor performance. The poor performance was due to the fact that we had a lot of equipment in bad shape as a result of the economy of the '80s.

"In trying to turn things around, we needed to provide our people with the equipment and materials to do their jobs properly, but also to provide them with processes and training so they could do their jobs with the proper equipment."

In short, he wanted to "professionalize" his workforce—which includes managers, supervisors and engineers as well as street lighting, and highway and bridge maintenance and repair workers — so it would get the respect it deserved.

"If you get a higher level of respect, you get a higher level of pride," he says, "and the best part of being proud is producing results." And it has worked. Today, he says, "service is at a high level of quality."

Moy attributes not a small part of the turnaround to the efforts of The Nyman Group, which has been working for years with Streets Department workers on everything from conflict management to presentation skills and team-building.

While Moy is now Deputy Streets Commissioner for Transportation, the commitment to training has continued under his successor, Commissioner William Johnson, and the relationship between the department and The Nyman Group continues. Why? Because as Marilyn Nyman, president of The Nyman Group puts it, "We do real-world training."

Michael Zaccagni, Human Resource Director for the Streets Department, and Clarena Tolson, a Deputy Streets Commissioner who has worked closely with The Nyman Group's point-person, Jackie Reeves, agree.

"Let's face it," says Tolson, "conflict is a natural result of human interaction. You can't eliminate it, and it's probably even beneficial to have some level there.

"But we've got to do the best we can to manage it so we can maximize outputs. Even though we're a government entity, performance is still key. Because of our limited resources and increasing strains on the city, performance is always at the forefront for us, and conflict, or strife, can cause distractions."

Training began with Traffic Engineering and Street Lighting groups, she says, "because that's where the sense of urgency was." Next will be sanitation workers.

"A lot of stress is caused when, say, we get a new vehicle, which increases employee output expectations by 25 percent," says Tolson. "They have to collect more, faster."

Of course, that's just one scenario. Training programs are customized by the unit, using real-life case scenarios, real-life instances that have actually occurred in the unit.

"It helps people look at themselves," says Zaccagni. "The trainers aren't just getting up there and saying, 'Here's what you do.' There's a lot of going in and out between the trainer and the coach. And when they start talking about issues, sometimes we don't know where the heck it's going to lead us.

"But one of the best things about the training experience has been that not only are the employees learning how to deal with their issues, but we [management] are learning a lot about their issues, too."

More importantly, though, Zaccagni and Tolson agree, the program has driven home to employees that conflict resolution is, if you will excuse the expression, a two-way street.

"People have learned to take responsibility for their own actions," says Zaccagni. "In order to be successful, this department depends on teamwork, and this program teaches us to not let things escalate." MN

Delivering bad news? See Secrets of Success, page 3

Message from Marilyn Nyman

The Gift of Executive Presence

You need it. Do you have it?

A top executive I know had a difficult message to deliver to his employees. There was to be a merger. He pulled no punches. He was candid and open. Not surprisingly, the employees were anxious, but the executive answered their questions honestly; clearly, he respected their concerns. Although they were not happy with the turn of events, they were not angry with the executive. They felt they had been dealt with fairly. And they calmly awaited further word.

Was it the executive's charm and charisma that left his employees feeling like that? No. It was what I call Executive Presence—the ability to let your character radiate through to relationships. It's communicating what you want to communicate, making sure that Intent equals Impact. The opposite of micro-management, it involves stepping back, reading body language and listening to tone of voice. It involves mastering the Art of the Question and truly hearing the answer. It involves removing yourself emotionally from the process. And it's hard.

How do you know if you have Executive Presence? As the late Supreme Court Justice, Potter Stewart, said about pornography: You know it when you see it.

Why do you need Executive Presence? You need it because competence in your field does not assure success. We assume that competence got you to the top. But success involves the ability to deal with people—with external and internal clients, with peers, with board members, with shareholders. In short, it requires the ability to build relationships. Executive Presence means you have the credibility and respect required to build successful relationships.

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HE'S A VERY IMPRESSIVE NEGOTIATOR – IN A MIKE TYSON SORT OF WAY

But top executives often are insulated from the fact that they may lack credibility and respect. Sometimes the higher you go, the less you know. After all, how many underlings are brave enough to say the Emperor has no clothes?

That's why you must take the initiative to determine whether you have Executive Presence. And if you find you do not, you must take the initiative to change. Here's how:

Hold up a mirror. You must see yourself as others see you. Are you confident or arrogant? Are you assertive or aggressive? Are you a micro-manager or an empowerer? Create a list of positive and negative attributes. Be honest with yourself. Then give the list to five people you respect. Ask them for feedback. Assure them their contributions will be anonymous. And mean it!

Decide if you want to change. This is the hardest step. Do you really want to change? Do you even need to change? If you are a brilliant neurosurgeon who garners extraordinary respect for your expertise, but no one likes you…or if you are an Al Dunlop-style change agent and need to make what will be unpopular decisions in order to move your company forward…then maybe you don't.

On the other hand, if it turns out that you are a legend in your own mind but truly want Intent to equal Impact because you understand the business imperative, then you might need to. But be pragmatic. You can't change everything at once. Pick one or two things that are doable. And do them. Six months later choose another two things. And so on.

Developing Executive Presence and solidifying your future as an effective leader is like most business efforts. It requires serious thought, more hard work than you'd probably like, and a healthy dose of humility.

But your staff, your board members, and Wall Street will know you have it when they see it. And it will serve you well as you watch your business prosper.

MN

Secrets of Success ...

…A first-hand account from

PEG BYRNE, Vice President, Internal Audits, Prudential

It's Not What You Do, It's How You Do It

In theory, I don't have to worry about how I interact with the folks I report to at Prudential, the international insurance, investment and real estate company. After all, I deal with all of the Prudential business heads and report independently to the audit committee of the Board; my job is to review and evaluate Prudential's controls in order to ensure everything from regulatory compliance to meeting of objectives.

In theory, then, I would not be out of line if I said to someone: "Hey! You screwed up here." That's my job — to find the screw-ups, point them out, and see that remedies are found.

But it's not necessary to operate that way. I have found that the most effective way to deliver that kind of "bad news" is to identify the broader, root cause of whatever lapse has been uncovered and to help people understand the lessons to be learned from these findings.

That means staying ahead of the curve. The better you understand the way the business operates, the less likely anyone is to be blindsided by an error.

It also means utilizing some of the softer skills of communicating — something we auditors are not particularly noted for.

After all, your goal is not punishment; your goal is to help the company. Don't we all

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Upcoming Workshops

NEW

POWER PRESENTATION SKILLS
1-DAY
July 19,2001
9 AM - 4 PM

ADVANCED PRESENTATIONS: GETTING TO WOW
1-DAY
July 20, 2001
9 AM - 4 PM

INTEREST-BASED NEGOTIATION SKILLS
1-DAY
July 26, 2001
9 AM - 4 PM

NEGOTIATIVE SELLING: IMPROVING ROI
1-DAY
July 27, 2001
9 AM - 4 PM

HIGH IMPACT CUSTOMER SERVICE
1/2-DAY
July 30, 2001
9 AM -NOON

POWERSPEAK FOR TELEPROFESSIONALS
1/2-DAY
July 31, 2001
9 AM - NOON

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR FULL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS.

For information about these programs or any of our other services call 215.956.0300 or e-mail dkline@nymangroup.com
And be sure to visit our Website at www.nymangroup.com

Quips & Quotes

On communication...
"We have two ears and only one tongue in order that we may hear more and speak less."
—Laertius Diogenes, Greek philosopher

"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."
—Peter F. Drucker, Austrian writer, author, educator

On entrepreneurialism...
"In order to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first create the universe."
—Carl Sagan
Cosmos

"You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist."
—Golda Meir
Israeli Prime Minister

On change...
"Change does not necessarily assure progress, but progress implacably requires change."
—Henry Steele Commager

"Perception is strong and sight weak. In strategy, it is important to see distant things as if they were close and to take a distanced view of close things."
—Miyamoto Musashi, Japanese warrior and strategist

On management...
"If you want a friend…get a dog."
—Harry S Truman
U.S. President

Secrets of Success cont.

have the same name at the top of our paychecks? Of course we do.

To me, executive interaction requires being succinct and getting the message across. It's best to say, "We have a problem here," and then get right to the essence of what needs to be done. Sometimes people in my position tend to go into too much detail. But that isn't necessary. At the high levels with which I work, I find that it's best to help people understand how the company can benefit from the recommendations being made. It's a matter of educating, not of punishing or chastising.

One time, we found that several million dollars had not been accounted for properly. We told those responsible that "in the course of testing, we uncovered these problems." We walked them through the procedures and focused on how they were carried out. What controls exist in the organization, we wanted to know, and what is management's understanding of those controls?

The audit function cuts across several business areas, and because of the complexity of the organization, we were able to identify the problem areas and recommend ways to correct them. We did our job well and communicated remedial procedures early enough to prevent further problems from occurring. Now, procedures based on our recommendations are being implemented and the problem is not likely to recur.

In such instances, I always remember that people are sensitive, that they are working hard, and that they understand their business areas. For my part, I try to make sure they understand my goal is not to punish them, but to help the company.

And when people understand there is a clear benefit to the company, they are more likely to be open to your recommendations. MN

The Buzz On Biz Books

By Roxanne Coady

What is the right direction for your business?

The 75 Greatest Management Decisions Ever Made...and 21 of the Worst *By Stuart Crainer*

This book examines some of the choices key business leaders have made over time—and, most importantly, HOW they made them. Among the "greatest:" Napoleon's decision to promote people based on merit, rather than breeding. Another: the process behind the launch of the very first Sears catalogue. And the worst decisions? In a way, these were more interesting, and I wish more had been written about them. Examples include Apple's decision NOT to let its product be cloned, and the 1899 decision to sell the bottling rights to Coca-Cola for $1 on the theory that people would never want to drink the stuff from a bottle if they could get it at a soda fountain instead. The bottom line: This book reminds me how important it is to "trust your gut:" the anecdotes prove that the smartest business decisions are based on both information AND intuition.

Roxanne Coady, CPA, former National Tax Director of BDO Seidman, is president of R.J. Julia Booksellers in Madison, CT. For more information or to order books, call 203.245.3959 or 800.74.READS or visit her Website at: www.rjjulia.com

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Meet the Team...

...in which we introduce another member of our team of experts... In this issue:

Dawn Kline

Dawn Kline is a true utility player: She can sell it and she can do it. As The Nyman Group's Vice President of Consulting Services, she has both strategic and consulting responsibilities. Strategically, Kline connects with clients to draw up game plans that deliver the greatest ROI. Yet, she is equally at home translating the desired business objectives into programs, addressing everything from needs analyses to focus groups and more. With a bachelor's degree in international business and some 15 years of general management experience that included developing a corporate university, she successfully bridges the gap between academic training and bottom-line business results.

The Leading Word is published quarterly by The Nyman Group, one of the top full-service training, coaching and consulting firms in the Philadelphia region. Its President and Founder, Marilyn S. Nyman, M.Ed.,CCC, creator of the Nyman Method, is a Certified Speech Pathologist with 20 years experience as a communication skills specialist, executive speech coach and consultant. For more information on any topics discussed in The Leading Word or on any of The Nyman Group's services and products, please contact
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