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Know Thyself and Workplace Conflict
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Knowing thyself is an in-depth understanding of "who I am" and "how I am." Understanding yourself is the product of both formal and informal experiences of living life. But, to be clear, this understanding is not the result of simply "having" experiences," but, the result of deep, consistent and conscious *reflection* on your experiences, i.e., lessons learned (the good, the bad and the ugly).

Life experience

Much self-awareness occurs as the result of experiencing the inner conflicts which tug on your sleeve and force you to change. One of the results of such transformation is that you often change your value system which is reflected in new ways of thinking, be-ing and do-ing.

Examples of life experiences that can bring you to know yourself, can raise your level of self-awareness and change consciously are mid-life crises (which, by the way, are affecting folks at earlier and earlier ages today no longer just at "mid-life") such as: health issues, relationship issues, career issues, financial issues and mental, emotional or psychological issues such heart attacks, divorces and failed relationships, loss of job, bankruptcy, stress, rustout, burnout, depression and addictions to chemical and non-chemical (food, alcohol, exercise, porn, blogging, etc.) substances.

What about the workplace?

In the workplace environment, organizational awareness is the totality of each employee's self-awareness. Where employees are more self-aware, workplace conflict can be minimal and constructive. In a workplace environment, where the majority of employees are non-self-aware, workplace conflict can be insidious, toxic, all-pervasive and destructive.

The bottom line is that the way your organization, silo, department or team handles interpersonal conflict can either be an experience of aliveness, vitality, juiciness, fun, collegiality, and camaraderie, or toxicity, demoralization, resentment, disrespect, resistance, and derailment.

The major cause of "loss processes" in organizations is not due to processes, but rather, is more often caused by dysfunctional interpersonal dynamics. More and more in today's organizations, success and effectiveness are dependent on the synergies that are created when people are in alignment - collaborative rather than competitive - with one another. When folks' attitudes, beliefs, and values are in alignment, their behaviors are consonant and supportive of departmental, team and organizational goals.

When "I" get in the way

When one is driven by self-limiting and self-defeating personal biases, prejudices, beliefs, perspectives, assumptions all of which are unspoken and often unconscious discord most often

rules and ruins the day, rules and ruins the meeting, rules and ruins the processes and rules and ruins relationships until...........until folks agree to "out the elephants" in the room and consciously deal with dysfunctional behaviors that underlie conflict.

"Soft skills" are really the "hard skills"

When leaders, managers and supervisors have the strength and courage to understand and agree that "soft skills" are the "hard skills" of effective relationships at work (and do the work that's required to bring people to that level of awareness), defensiveness, resistance, push-back, turf and ego issues begin to melt and metabolize in a manner that people begin to feel, and be, freer in their behaviors and in a way that fosters greater mutual respect of the dignity of one another.

The process of knowing thyself begins when you consciously explore "how I am" and "who I am" when it comes to "the way I am", i.e., the way you communicate, with others. Self-mastery explores:

- your verbal and non-verbal behaviors
- your emotional behaviors - how you express your feelings and emotions (and *if* you express feelings and emotions)
- your intentions/motives *underneath* your behaviors - hidden agendas - or disharmony where what you "do" is out of alignment with what you "say"

Basic requirements

Know thyself requires taking a conscious look at how you experience yourself at work (and, for that matter, at home, at play and in relationship) and how you experience your interactions with others. Self-mastery requires you to look at the disconnects that exist between what you say, think, feel and do disconnects that lead to being out of harmony, integrity, being unethical, being disrespectful (in thought and action) that result in counterproductive patterns of behavior, and conflict.

Know thyself requires taking a conscious look at why, for example, you *need* to lie, cheat, steal, bully, gossip, be disagreeable, disrespectful, resistant, non-trusting, sabotaging, discourteous, and insensitive.

Know thyself requires taking a conscious look at "where I'm coming from" and whether "where I'm coming from" is supportive or limiting to the team, department and organization (family, relationship...).

The bottom line of knowing thyself and conflict is this: conflict is rarely the result of "technical" issues. Most often, conflict is based on some underlying fear and is an interpersonal, psycho-emotional dynamics issue.

Task vs. relationship

People relate to one another on the basis of a "task orientation" or on the basis of a "relationship

orientation." Task orientation centers around functions, roles and business strategies and tactics. Relationship orientation centers around trust, safety, understanding, respect and sensitivity.

Effective conflict resolution must rest on the fulcrum of relationship orientation, on people, not processes. Organizational self-awareness occurs when the majority of employees are engaged, consciously, from the perspective of relationship orientation, i.e., "who I am" and "how I am" at work, and not solely on "what I do". (The same is also true of partners in relationship!)

A self-aware person is one who examines the quality of his/her interpersonal relationships on a consistent basis. A self-aware organization is one that examines the quality of its interpersonal dynamics on a regular basis. To be an ever effective leader, manager or supervisor, this exploration needs to lead to supporting people to actively and consciously engage in personal growth in an effort to reduce the negative effects of workplace conflict. Focusing on the "technical" alone won't do it...never has, never will.

So, some questions for self-reflection are:

- How would I rate myself on a scale of 1(low) to 10(high) on the following: (a) my being a team player; (b) my relationships with others; (c) how much I trust others; (d) the quality of my communication efforts with others; and (e) my attitude?
- On a scale of 1(low) to 10(high) how self-aware am I vis-a-vis my feelings and emotions, how I came to believe what I believe about the world, the world of work and about people in the world, about my values and what really drives me, and why?
- Do I believe life is a "zero-sum" game...that if others get "theirs" I won't get "mine?" If so, why? And, if so, has this attitude brought me more pain or happiness in my life on a daily basis?
- Do my relationships manifest trust, dignity and respect?
- Am I harboring anger and resentment from times past? If so, why? Do I really think I can "change the past and make the past better?"
- Do I live my life based on the "oughts" and "shoulds" of others? If so, why?
- Do I have counterproductive habits and patterns I am afraid to release? If, yes, why?
- Are my relationships at work characterized as "task orientated" or relationship orientated"?

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