

Make Sure You Are on the Right Road

By Markku Kauppinen

I remember the telephone conversation vividly even though it occurred over 8 years ago. I was working with a training company in California, just north from beautiful San Diego. This company had recently become one of our affiliates and we were working on integrating their training programs with our assessment products.

It was time for a break and I stepped outside to enjoy the ever beautiful weather in that part of the world. While I was contemplating why the local news channels bother with meteorologist ("Five-day forecast: Very nice!"), my cell phone rang.

"Hello, this is Markku", I answered cheerily.

"This is Joe from ABC Training", the voice said rather curtly. It must be raining on the East Coast I thought because I knew that this affiliate was located just outside of Washington, D.C.

"Hi Joe! It is nice to hear from you. How can I help you?"

"As you know, we here at ABC Consulting use *Extended DISC* quite a lot with our clients. I just started here about two weeks ago. The owner asked me to get familiar with *Extended DISC* and he thought that the best way would be for me to complete the questionnaire and go over my own report", Joe said in a voice that was making the sky overcast all the way in California. "And, let me tell you, Sonny, this report is bulls..t!"

While I was 31 at the time and looked young for my age (at least I liked to think so), I had never been called Sonny before. Joe had made it very clear he was not too happy with me or our product.

"What is the matter, Joe?"

"Listen, Sonny! I have been using assessments for almost 20 years and I know DISC really well. I am a DI-style. Your report shows me as 90% C-style and 10% D-style!" Joe vented. "Like I said, this is bulls...t!"

"I see. Joe, let me ask you: Did you have any distractions when you completed the questionnaire?" I asked.

"I know how to do this, Sonny!! I took only 10 minutes, no interruptions, and I focused only on the work environment!" Joe ranted.

"Joe, may I ask you a question?" I asked with my kindest voice.

"OK."

"How do you buy a car?"

"How do I buy a car!!? What difference does that make?" Joe was really upset by now.

"Please put your report aside for three minutes and tell me. Just humor me for a moment."

"Well, first I research *Consumer Reports* for their test results..." Joe started to explain. And he went on for about five minutes about how he did research about the different makes and models. He read magazines. He spent time on the Internet reading about what the owners of different cars liked and disliked about the cars. He claimed that he was also able to find out what the dealers paid for the vehicles in something called a "black book".

"Then I visit two or three dealers to find a salesperson who really knows his stuff", he said with determination. "I give them \$500 profit. I think that is fair."

"Thank you Joe. Can I ask you just one more question?"

"OK."

"Let's say that you were delivering customer service training and you wanted to help your participants to learn to identify different customer styles. If you did an exercise to identify the styles of customers and you had a description of someone buying a car like you, how would identify that style?"

The line went silent for about 30 seconds. "Markku, I am a C-style!" Joe exclaimed.

What our clients keep telling us is that they really like the fact that *Extended DISC* separates the "true styles from wanna-be styles" as one client put it. It is important to them because in order to work on the real strengths and development areas, the tool that one uses must identify who the person really is.

If the assessment provides different results depending on what environment the respondent thinks about when responding (for example, home vs. work environment), what result can you and your participant trust and use? What is the starting point for the behavioral modification? The tool **MUST** identify the true style or you will never be able to help the participants to become more successful. If you do not know where the journey begins, the best map in the world cannot lead you to the destination.

Make sure your assessments identify who the assessed individuals really are. Otherwise, you will send them on a wrong road. It is one thing not to reach your destination when you are driving your car. It is quite another to lead another person in the wrong direction because no one was quite sure where the journey started.

As for Joe, he is on the right road. And, we are good friends. Occasionally, he calls me Sonny.

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Bashing the Boss

By Marshall Goldsmith

According to a recent survey by Badbossology.com and Development Dimensions International – a majority of employees spend 10 or more hours per month complaining or listening to others complain about bad bosses – and almost one third spend 20 hours or more per month.

While the survey is intended to point out why *bosses* need to be trained, so they can change behavior – the results may also be interpreted to point out why *employees* need to be trained, so they can change behavior.

Employees should learn that – for their own self-interest - there are several reasons why they should not engage in counter-productive "boss bashing" – even if they do have a bad boss.

When you are "boss bashing":

- *You are wasting your time.* There are a lot of productive things that you can be doing in 10-20 hours per month. Even if you don't respect your boss, you can be working at improving your own performance. If you have this much time to waste, learn some new skills. This way you may eventually get a better job and a new boss!
- *You are demeaning yourself.* If you so brilliant that you can consistently judge your boss – and your boss is so stupid that he merits endless hours of critique, why does the brilliant *you* report to the idiot *him*? Ultimately when we discredit our boss – we discredit ourselves. The people around you will not say so on the outside – but on the inside may well be thinking you are an even bigger "loser" than your boss.
- *You are hurting your company.* Your co-workers have friends and family members. Your stories may get repeated to others.

People can get the feeling that your company is being run by idiots. If the managers are so bad, why should anyone believe that the products are so good? Why should people spend their hard-earned money on your company's products?

- *You are coming across as a hypocrite.* When you are bashing your boss “behind her back” the person you are talking to may well be thinking, “What do you say about me when I am not around?” It is usually obvious that your cynical or sarcastic comments are not delivered directly to the boss. Why should the person you are speaking to believe that you would treat them with any more respect than you treat your boss?
- *You are communicating a lack of courage.* If the boss is behaving in a way that is bad for the company, why don't you challenge the boss? The answer must be that you are afraid. Part of the problem may be that your boss is intimidating – a bigger problem may be that you lack the courage to say what you believe is right.
- *You are just depressing yourself and others.* There are a million things that are wrong with the world. People are starving. Murders are being committed. Millions live in poverty. If you want to talk about depressing topics, why stop at your boss? Why not just spend the day talking about how bad life is? A better plan might be to make the best of what you have to work with.
- *You are not enhancing your career.* It is a small world. It is eminently possible that at least some of your countless hours spent in “boss bashing” will be either overheard by the boss or shared by someone else with the boss. Would you want to promote someone who was spending 20 hours per month stabbing you in the back?

We have all made useless destructive comments about our bosses and co-workers. In fact this problem is not just true for employees. I have reviewed 360° feedback reports on leaders at all

levels in major corporations. Even a substantial number of executives are rated poorly on the item “avoids destructive comments about other people or groups”.

A simple process that I teach my clients seems to work well in addressing this “destructive comment” problem. Before speaking – take a deep breath. Ask yourself four simple questions:

1. Will this comment help my company?
2. Will this comment help our customers?
3. Will this comment help the person I am talking to?
4. Will this comment help the person that I am talking about?

If the answers are “no, no, no and no”, I will give you a simple strategy – that does not require a Ph.D. to implement. Don't say it!

In my classes I have everyone “fine” their fellow class mates \$2 every time that the person makes an unnecessary destructive comment. I have been doing this for years. How much money have I helped generate for charity by doing this exercise? Over \$300,000!

Destructive comments do a lot more damage than \$2. You may want to set up a system at work that includes “fines” for useless, counter-productive, “slams”. You might find that this helps your workplace to become much more positive – and you may also end up raising a few bucks for a good cause!

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith recently been named by the American Management Association as one of 50 great thinkers and business leaders who have impacted the field of management. His 18 books include the Business Week best-seller, *The Leader of the Future* and *Global Leadership: The Next Generation*. Marshall is a world authority in helping successful leaders achieve positive change in behavior: for themselves, their people and their teams.