

## **/// Frustration!**

Frustration! Unfortunately, this is possibly the single most common emotion in the business world today. It can manifest itself in our interactions with those above us, our peers, and with our subordinates. As a business leader and a quality professional, you have to be able to recognize its indicators and deal with its root cause to keep it from impacting productivity. This can become a serious issue when it leads to negative behaviors like disengagement, avoiding assignments, unusually high absenteeism, or a higher than normal turnover rate.

It's very simple to recognize frustration in yourself. Dealing with it effectively can be another story. In the short-term, it can be as simple as mild irritation. If it involves something major or it has become systemic or long-term, it can become very corrosive to our attitude and our effectiveness in the workplace. The simple stuff we've learned to deal with since kindergarten. I want to focus on the techniques to handle the tougher stuff in your life and how to resolve this within your team.

It's human nature to convince ourselves the problem or the situation is worse than it may really be. If it IS that bad, it can intensify our feelings of helplessness and lack of control. There are some things you can immediately begin to do to help you regain a feeling of control and progress.

1. Find a quiet spot where you can think. Focus on the specific issue that is driving the situation and write out things on paper to help you break the situation down into its individual components. This is a great place to use our tools on ourselves and do a Fishbone Analysis for cause and effect!
2. After you've completed a list of the issues and their causes, prioritize them with a P.I.C.K. Chart in terms of "What Can I Control" and the "Degree of Impact" on a scale of 1 to 10 this issue has on your situation. Yet another opportunity for us to use our quality tools on ourselves.
3. Use those areas you've identified as having significant control and high impact to begin developing an Action Item List of things you can do to regain control over what you can accomplish within your sphere of influence. Be very specific and focus on short-term achievable goals. Do not let yourself fall victim of trying to "solve world hunger"...that's quite possibly what led you to become frustrated in the first place! List no more than 4 things and specifically what you can do today or no later than this week. You will be amazed at how much can be gained by seeing immediate results in the things you can get done to relieve frustration in your life. Remember, you can only control the things you have the power to deal with in this life. However, that power is often severely underappreciated by most people who fail to recognize just how much control they do have over what they do and how they do it!
4. Measure your progress from week-to-week in dealing with the situation. Our feelings of frustration and irritation often are exacerbated by seeing no apparent improvement or change. Creating a way to see progress quickly changes that feeling of frustration into one of satisfaction! Another very tangible benefit to this exercise is that it will give you data to

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use with your peers and your management team to help them see the benefits of your argument and your efforts.

5. Celebrate the small gains and the quick results you achieve! Most of us want to wait until we “hit a home run” to celebrate. Those celebrations are indeed sweet but they don’t come often enough to sustain us in our day-to-day struggles with frustration. Recognize the progress you have made and the results you are getting. Believe it or not, the greatest changes in the world most often happen one person at a time and with one small victory after another.

You also have to be able to recognize and respond to your team members when they become frustrated and dispirited. This is a major reason for a loss of productivity. As much as we hate to admit it, we can be as big a source of frustration to our people as our management team can be to us. Signs to look for are a reduction in morale, higher than normal levels of grumbling and complaining, avoiding assignments, increased absenteeism, and more irritation in the workplace. When you see these signs, it’s time to stop, look, and listen.

1. The most important thing you can do is to create a safe environment for people to tell you what’s bothering them. Most people will say “nothing”...Just like when you hear this at home, you know it’s anything but “nothing”! There are multiple ways for you to find a way for your people to talk with you. Use the one that will be most effective with your team and your culture.
2. Force yourself to listen to them without being defensive. A great lesson I learned was to study all the things my leadership did to frustrate me and find ways to not do that to anyone else...sounds simple right? It’s anything but! The problem is that we learn to emulate behaviors both consciously and subconsciously from those around us. Pay close attention to the “generation” you are dealing with as they process these issues and feelings very differently!
3. Once you’ve heard them out, use the steps above to develop an effective plan of action to deal with the team situation.

Frustration and discouragement will always be with us as long as there are people in our organizations. Learning how to effectively address these situations will make you a better leader and increase your team’s productivity. Last, but not least, decreasing frustration inevitably leads to increasing one’s quality of life. And isn’t quality what we’re all about?

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