



Dealing with Blasters

by Lou Stoops

Have you ever had someone get in your face and really unload a lot of hostility? Have you ever had to work with an individual that kept everyone walking on eggshells because they never knew from one moment to the next, the kind of mood that person would be in? Those individuals deplete energy and cause conflict in the workplace. They like to confront by erupting. They feel as though everyone has a right to their opinion. After all, they're just telling it like it is! Well, they certainly need to grow up and get a life. My focus this week is not on the hostile confronters, but on the poor souls they're always stalking. Allow me to share some techniques to use when dealing with what I like to call the Blaster.

Blasters are everywhere. We work with them and we may live with them. Learning how to deal with them effectively may help us help them. Knowing how to diffuse negative emotions in others can make us less stressed and also enhance the quality of our relationships. Blasters will not be ignored so use the following techniques to reach them and teach them.

1. Don't Add To Their Anger

Your voice and body language must be managed when someone confronts you. You must deal with their emotions before you can deal with the facts of the issue they're upset over.

2. Really Listen

Listening to someone is one of the most meaningful things you can do. Angry people often feel as though no one ever really listens to them. They may carry a big chip on their shoulders but you prove them wrong when you open your ears before you open your mouth.

3. Gently Frame Your View

Address the conflict in a gentle manner. If there is obvious disagreement, frame the difference in a way that conveys openness. You want them to know that you're not a closed person but that you don't see things quite the way they do.

4. Be Willing To Seek A Moderator

When you are unable to resolve matters, it may help to ask another person to step in and hear both sides. Remember, a Blaster likes to be heard. By bringing in someone else, they may feel more compelled to tone down the rhetoric and deal in more rational terms. Simply say, "You could be right. Let's ask Charlie what he thinks".

5. Own Your Actions

If the Blaster is right about the issue, be willing to admit it. Each of us must own our actions. We make mistakes and that's life! The Blaster, by their immature manner, puts people on the defensive. To admit error may feel like you're condoning their style of confrontation or that they have won a great victory. Don't slip into win/lose thinking. Right is right and wrong is wrong. Own your actions.

6. Don't Gloat

Because Blasters tend to be emotionally driven and fail to think things through, they will often be wrong about the issues they're confronting you with. It would be very easy to gloat over their mistake. Why not seek to use the moment as an opportunity to build a



better relationship. Remember, you can win arguments or you can win people but you rarely win them both.

7. Try To Walk Away As Friends

Working relationships are usually day-to-day. You'll see this person often and your effectiveness may depend on a good relationship. As far as it depends on you, try and be friends. I know that in some cases this will be impossible. Try your best.

One of the biggest needs in the workplace today is a crash course on civility. Workplace violence has grown tremendously in recent years and the trend indicates that it will continue to grow. Only by learning manners and practicing commonsense skills that diffuse rather than escalate conflict, can we see the workplace become a more productive and safe environment.