

Removing the Barriers to Getting Good Work

What to manage to ensure the work is the focus

- Start every communication with the problem we are trying to solve.
 - We all have more on our plates to deal with than we have ever had before. Thanks to the digital age, easy access to people, all day zoom calls, PM platforms, you name the culprit, the reality is that we manage more than ever before. So it is important to recenter at many points throughout the day because we are pulled in so many directions.
 - In our minds, it doesn't matter how you are reaching out to communicate about the work- start all communications with the reason why we are here on the assignment, which is addressing the problem we have been charged with solving.
 - You have heard us discuss the brief, and this is in larger part the reason for aligning to one. But of course you do not have time to re-enter the brief at each point of communication- you would lose people! So remind them of the problem, and then send along whatever the communication meeting agenda is. This gives people a minute to refocus, hone in on what they need to do, and stay on course through the communication/discussion. It also kicks things off from an invaluable place of objectivity, no matter what else is going on in their day or on their plate.
 - Make your decisions based on the target you are solving for. Create a rubric or decision criteria. I did this all the time for evaluating creative. It helps people to understand your POV as well as makes it a more objective assessment. This takes maturity.
- Manage the egos according to their personality.
 - It is not just the work itself that has piled on our plates, but does it seem to anyone else like egos seem to get bigger and bigger these days? We would in large part attribute some of this to the previous point with the increased stress of our jobs, but we also believe that with things like "everyone wanting to be an influencer" and more noise that ever, there are some people out there that believe their voice must get louder to combat this and/or they have to throw their weight around more.
 - The good news about this point is that if you are proactive and aware of the personalities you are encountering, you know the culprits. The bad news is that this is trickier one to navigate. If you need more specific help than this point provides, check out the episode on managing egos "How to Effectively Manage Ego on your Team". When in doubt, avoid triggering them. And what we mean is if they are the type that wants to go toe-to-toe in an argumentative way, don't take the bait. Here them out for a moment, interrupt calmly, and ask if we can put this in the parking lot/take it off line. Remind what we are here to solve for today. Have someone that likes to steal the stage and talk over everyone? Ask them before the meeting to help you help the less vocal team members speak up since they are SO GOOD AND OUTGOING AT EXPRESSING THEIR POV. Or, let everyone know at the beginning that there is limited time so you need "these three things from everyone in the room". This is where agendas can be your friend.
 - There is strength in numbers, so use your allies in the room. Who can you tap to help you reinforce the agenda? Is there someone better at managing this particular person? It is okay to seek out help.
 - The biggest destructor of highly functional teams is someone who can't get on-board with the culture.
- Nominate the right person to deliver the work.
 - Even if it is not you. We just talked about managing egos and yours is included! This can be a tough one to swallow, especially if the work is predominately yours. But we can speak from experience in saying that the old "don't shoot the messenger" phrase exists for the reason of this point. Sometimes, even if you tend to be the most likeable person in the world, there will be people that do not jive with your personality.
 - The point here is that there can be cases where a hard message has to be delivered and you may not have the most finesse, or you might be too direct for the client's liking, or at their very core, you remind them of someone they don't like or had a bad experience with. There may be no logical rhyme or reason, but take yourself out of the hot seat and nominate someone better suited. It will pay dividends in the long run.
- Concede where there is opportunity to do so.
 - This might feel contrary to the entire point of the episode- why would you concede when you are trying to do what is right for the work? The point here is to compromise where it doesn't matter to the quality of the work.
 - If you become so hyper focused just on the work, you will not bring other along with you, and you will make people resent you in the process. Being a master of the personalities and how to proactively and strategically see and operate through the big picture is how you will get to the best work. And other people will want to work with you because you come across as so very accommodating!

