

# *Corporate* **TRENDS**

Leader's Guide



*Ideas, innovation and inspiration for managers - Australia's leading business training consultancy*

**Jan Burnes**

*Jan Burnes, MBA, is the founder and Director of an Internationally known Training Consultancy, and winner of the Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award.*

# Contents

page 01 **Biography**

Page 02 **Learning From the Wisdom of Others**

A structured mentoring program provides an organisation with the greatest opportunity for growth and professional development.

Page 03 **Taming Those Difficult People...**

“Why be difficult – when, with a little effort, you can be impossible!” Are you working with someone who is difficult to deal with, aggressive, submissive or totally disinterested? Does it make you wonder if some people’s main ambition in life is to gain an MBA – a “Master of Business Aggression!”

Page 04 **Coping with the Difficult Person on Your Team...**

No, you’re not imagining it. There are some people who can brighten a room just by leaving it!

Page 05 **Switch on Your Selling Power!**

When faced with the task of having to ‘SELL’, many staff secretly believe it is ‘beneath them.’ And, whilst they may pay ‘lip service’ to any sales training offered, the question remains: “Do they really enjoy selling?”

# Jan Burnes

*Jan Burnes, MBA, is the founder and Director of an Internationally known Training Consultancy, and winner of the Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award.*



## **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS, BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS, BUSINESS**

Previously the director of a top performing company employing over 1,000 people, Jan is now a training consultant specialising in Sales, Customer Service, Management and Communication Skills. She works with many major organisations developing people at all levels to achieve higher standards of performance. A Nationally accredited trainer, she is also an accredited workplace assessor, training-needs analyst, and curriculum designer; She has an MBA majoring in Business Communication and was the winner of the Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award in 1997.

International known as a trainer and speaker, Jan believes that effective learning has to be participative and interactive - her learning events are built around practical exercises, role-play and case studies. Her training style focuses not only on explaining new ideas or developing new skills, but also on motivating people to use them and develop themselves as individuals. She manages to achieve the right balance between style and substance, content and format. Participants leave with many practical, proven and often original ideas they can easily implement in their own working environment.

Topics include but are not limited to: Professional Selling Skills, Exceptional Customer Service, Coping with Negative Situations and Difficult People, Communication Skills, Mentoring and Coaching, The Experienced Supervisor and The Art of Leadership. Contact Jan on Tel: (02) 9974 4899, Fax: (02) 9974 4833, e-mail: [jburnes@businessinaction.com.au](mailto:jburnes@businessinaction.com.au) or visit her website at: [www.businessinaction.com.au](http://www.businessinaction.com.au)

# Learning From the Wisdom of Others

***A structured mentoring program provides an organisation with the greatest opportunity for growth and professional development.***

**W**hen you were young and searching for the meaning of life, can you recall someone, maybe a grandparent or a teacher; someone older, patient and wise, who understood you and helped you to see the world as a more profound place and gave you sound advice to help you make your way through it.

Maybe, like me, you lost track of your Mentor as you made your way, the insights faded and the world seemed harsher. Wouldn't you like to see that person again, ask the bigger questions that still haunt you, receive the wisdom for your busy life today the way you once did when you were younger?

The origins of "Mentoring" come from the ancient Greeks. When Odysseus, King of Ithaca, went to fight the Trojan War, he entrusted the care of his son, Telemachus, to his friend, *Mentor*. In time, the word Mentor became synonymous with a trusted friend, teacher or wise person.

History offers many examples of helpful mentoring relationships: Socrates and Plato, Hayden and Beethoven, Freud and Jung. Legend and history record the deeds of princes and kings but each of us has a birthright to be all that we can be. Mentors are those special people in our lives, who, through their deeds and work, help us to move toward fulfilling our potential.

## Mentoring in the Workplace

My first workplace mentor was also my boss; it came naturally to him as part of his management style. We never discussed mentoring and it's only with hindsight that I realise that this is what occurred.

This manager challenged me – gave me assignments that stretched me. He coached me, led by example and demonstrated ways of doing things. When I brought a problem to him he would listen attentively, ask some astute questions, then utter the most powerful words a protégé will ever hear: "...and what do you think we should do about this?"

I quickly learned not to bring him the problem without also offering a potential solution. Over the three years I worked with Colin, I learned and grew. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that I gained, built competence and confidence.

Mentoring is not about creating dependency – it's about encouraging the protégé to become independent. Develop their latent abilities, spread their wings – fly!

Mentoring, in one form or another, happens in almost every work environment. These relationships are often informal, with the protégé selecting their own 'guru'; approaching them when guidance is needed.

## Benefits of Mentoring for the Organisation

- Measured performance improvement
- More cost effective than external training
- Organisational objectives can be achieved
- Maximises job satisfaction
- Less time away from work
- Tailored to meet specific needs
- Fast tracking promotability
- Increased staff loyalty
- Reduces the failure/leaving rate
- Improves productivity
- Speeds up induction of new recruits
- Provides equal opportunities to otherwise disadvantaged groups

A formal or structured mentoring program however, assists the organisation to change and achieve it's objectives in a positive and nurturing environment. Staff morale improves, productivity increases and quality standards are raised.

Experienced staff are the most valuable asset an organisation has. When these people mentor new or junior employees, there is an imparting of knowledge, skills and information which could otherwise take years for the protégé to acquire.

Young staff often feel isolated from senior management, creating a, 'them and us' culture. The mentor can provide a valuable conduit to the upper echelons of your organisation giving the protégé a real feeling of belonging; being a part of the overall picture.

## Key Success Factors

The success of a formal Mentoring Program depends on the commitment shown by everyone involved to meet the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities of mentoring. The first step is to develop a clear statement of program objectives against which progress may be monitored and measured.

Selecting the right people to become mentors is of prime importance – not everyone is suited to the role or will want to participate. A selection criteria needs to be developed, outlining the skills and attributes required in the mentors. This criteria should be based on the culture of the organisation and the objectives to be achieved.

The selection of protégés should be made on solid track record rather than a prospective protégé's ability to present themselves well at a one-off interview. Merrill Lynch, developed an application form for protégés where they had to state why they thought they were suitable candidates, what benefits and skills they wished to obtain and what kind of self-development activities they have pursued in the last year.

Training for both the mentors and the protégés should be provided to ensure they fully understand their role and responsibilities, the benefits of the program, how to develop goals and milestones and how to establish and maintain a professional, friendly relationship. An awareness of some of the problems that could arise and how to avoid them is also essential to the success of the program.

Mentoring programs can be short term or long term. A brief '*meeting of the minds*' or last for years, until the protégé finally outgrows their mentor. There is no hard and fast formula but experience has shown that a one-year program appears to be the minimum to produce measurable outcomes. The rewards can be great for everyone involved. Happy Mentoring!

*Jan Burnes is one of Australia's leading Business Communications Trainers. She runs practical, highly effective workshops on "Professional Selling Skills".*

*Tel: (02) 9974 4899*

*Email: jburnes@businessinaction.com.au*

*Website: www.businessinaction.com.au*

# Taming Those Difficult People...

***“Why be difficult – when, with a little effort, you can be impossible!”  
Are you working with someone who is difficult to deal with, aggressive,  
submissive or totally disinterested? Does it make you wonder if some  
people’s main ambition in life is to gain an MBA – a “Master of  
Business Aggression!”***

**A**ll of us recognise difficult behaviour when we see it. It’s when people: ‘blow up’ over the smallest thing or complain constantly about anything and everything. They are in a perpetual ‘sulk’, spread rumours, start ‘small wars’ and always say, “It’s not my fault” or “It’s not my job.”

These behaviours can easily destabilise an otherwise happy workplace. We feel reluctant to go to work, our productivity plummets and morale generally lowers.

So, what can we do about it?

Strangely enough, the place to begin to understand difficult behaviour in others, lies in understanding ourselves. Just as every person has differently shaped feet, we all have differently ‘shaped’ personalities. However, when two people have opposing personality traits, a negative ‘clash of personalities’ can occur.

In a recent interview, Sophia Loren, the Italian film star, was asked if she continues to ‘act’ when she meets people. Her response was, “No, I’m like litmus paper - I don’t ‘act’, I ‘react’ to people.” And that is true of most of us. Different personality styles have different effects on us, both negative and positive.

## **Incompatible personality styles**

Most of us have met people who give us the instant ‘irritate’ and yet who seem to be quite popular with other people! It therefore follows that many cases of difficult behaviour in others, results from incompatible personality styles. By finding out more about who we are, our behaviour traits and our personality style, we can begin to understand how others differ from us. This understanding in itself, often solves our problem with these ‘difficult’ people

The first thing participants do, in our one-day workshop ‘Dealing with Difficult People’, is to identify their own personality style. They then learn how to identify other people’s personality styles.

In some cases, however, people habitually behave in ways that cause stress and

demotivation and undermine others’ efforts. In this case of habitual bad behaviour (actually probably fewer than 10 per cent), recognition of the difficult behaviour patterns can be followed with specific coping strategies. We can’t change these people but we can learn to cope with them. Here are five power questions that can help you to analyse any difficult situation:

## **The 5 Power Questions**

1. How frequently do these types of situations occur with this difficult person?

If you answer ‘rarely’ or ‘sometimes’ the problem is most likely solely one of incompatibility.

If your answer is ‘rarely’ it may not even justify an action. Just ignoring the person on these occasions can be sufficient to deter them – if they don’t get a reaction, it ain’t fun anymore!

2. Am I being objective?

What observations, feedback or interpretations have you received regarding your difficult person? Are others having a similar problem or just you?

3. How does your difficult person view you? Would s/he consider *you* a difficult person? What behaviours, attitudes or habits of yours might be considered difficult?

4. What specific changes are you actually looking for in your difficult person’s behaviour? How do they make you feel about yourself?

5. What actions can you personally take to help change the situation?

## **The strategies to use**

Once you have clearly identified the behavioural styles of yourself and your difficult person and objectively analysed the situation, here are the steps to use:

The first strategy you should try is honest confrontation. It may be that your difficult person is simply unaware of how his or her

behaviour is affecting others. In other words, confront the difficult behaviour directly. If you’re lucky, the person will realise the problem and change their behaviour. If not, then you can move on to implement specific coping techniques. When you do this make sure you:

- Make an appointment so you’re sure you have the person’s attention. State your ambivalence about bringing up the matter.
- State your assumption that the person doesn’t know what s/he’s doing or how it’s affecting you.
- Describe the behaviour and it’s effect on others matter-of-factly
- Offer help

A good example of the effectiveness of this strategy was the recent very public spat between the Health Minister and the President of the AMA. They amicably resolved their differences over a lunch meeting. The pair can now make a ‘fresh start’ and move on.

Habitually difficult people are nearly always damaged in some way. They’ve been badly hurt – usually early on in life – and are not in charge of their emotions. In fact, they often have no idea about the effect they have on others because they, themselves feel such victims inside.

This is the classic situation of someone who has been abused or mistreated in some way actually abusing or mistreating others, consciously or unconsciously.

Difficult people usually feel unloved, the odd-one-out and unlikable. But they put it on other people to make it better instead of taking charge for themselves. They will nearly always make you feel guilty for what is, in fact, their problem.

Difficult people are everywhere, and it’s an important part of our personal development to learn how to turn close encounters of the worst kind into civil, sane and productive exchanges.

*Jan Burnes is one of Australia’s leading Business Communications Trainers. She runs practical, highly effective workshops on “Professional Selling Skills”.*

*Tel: (02) 9974 4899*

*Email: jburnes@businessinaction.com.au*

*Website: www.businessinaction.com.au*

# Coping with the Difficult Person on Your Team...

*No, you're not imagining it. There are some people who can brighten a room just by leaving it!*

**H**owever, according to experts such as Dr Robert Bramson, author of the book, *“Dealing with Difficult People”* over 90 per cent of workers, want to do a good job and get along well with others. If you are reading this, a member of the minority is probably causing you some grief. Some problems exist, and as a supervisor, you need to try and work things out.

It might simply be a personality clash or your employee may have some problems that need to be worked out. Even if it is *‘their problem’* you must take ownership of finding a solution. Letting the situation remain unresolved may have a contagious effect on the rest of your staff members.

Try to recall past conversations with your problem employee. What was the tone of your meetings like? Were you highly critical and quick to point out mistakes in the person's work? Were tensions high and emotions running at fever pitch? Maybe not each and every time... but be honest now, didn't just a little bit of that exist?

## Children in adult's bodies

As a supervisor you will quickly learn (if you haven't already) that difficult staff members are just like children – nothing more than little people in big people's bodies; and, just like children, they tend to live up to our expectations of them. Therefore, if we are always critical and complaining, they will continue to act in a way to give rise to criticism. They often misbehave for the intended purpose of attracting attention. If they can't get attention with positive behaviour, they begin to act improperly to get their pay-off.

Conversely, if we praise and recognise them, they seem to blossom and grow – even if they were a *‘little stinker’* before! Give the employee a *‘quick fix’* by giving reassurance of their ability. Chances may be the person lacks the confidence needed to keep up with others in the team. A kind, reassuring word from the boss may be just the boost needed to get over some hurdles.

It may be that the employee is just overwhelmed with the amount of work that needs to be done. Schedules, deadlines, new technology and the like can get pretty frightening at times. Be there, to provide the encouragement needed.

Be prepared for one more possibility. You may not like hearing this, but it just might be that this person doesn't like you. In fact, this person might not like their colleagues either. Some people just don't seem to like anyone! This is extremely frustrating for the supervisor who works hard to develop a sense of team spirit and camaraderie amongst the staff.



## It's results that count

Don't lose sight of your long-term goal. Getting the work out is what counts. Be willing to accept the other person's feelings as long as this doesn't interfere with your work, the work of others and the overall results of your team. It's not required that you like someone or be liked in return, in order to get the job done. This is difficult to accept if you are a high *“Relater”* personality type.

Put your personal feelings about this person aside for a moment. Check with others to get a feel for the mood in the department along with their attitudes about this particular person. What would happen if you did nothing further? Sometimes, in difficult situations, the *‘cure’* can be worse than the *‘complaint’* – the hardest thing is to do nothing.

## There's always one...

An example of this came about four weeks after I hired a new receptionist. She used to put all my incoming faxes on my desk first thing in the morning – still in the long continuous roll as they had emerged from the fax machine. This made extra work for me, as I had to cut and separate the individual faxes, collate them and then staple them together.

I approached the young woman, feeling quite agitated and requested that in future would she please staple my incoming faxes together. The following morning there was the usual pile of faxes on my desk but this time she had stapled all of them together by putting the staples round every edge of the pages!

You need to decide if you and the rest of your team could continue to *‘live with it’* and work with this person? How has this employee affected team morale and team productivity? When these last two points become an issue, it is time to do something about it – and fast! This situation, more than any other you may face as a supervisor, calls for immediate and decisive action.

Difficult employees can be among the most trying of management challenges. It is not easy to get maximum productivity out of your people and maintain a satisfied, loyal workforce. But it is these twin goals that lie at the heart of good management.

*Jan Burnes is one of Australia's leading Business Communications Trainers. She runs practical, highly effective workshops on “Professional Selling Skills”.*

*Tel: (02) 9974 4899*

*Email: jburnes@businessinaction.com.au*

*Website: www.businessinaction.com.au*

# Switch on Your Selling Power!

*When faced with the task of having to 'SELL', many staff secretly believe it is 'beneath them.' And, whilst they may pay 'lip service' to any sales training offered, the question remains: "Do they really enjoy selling?"*

Is your organisation technology and product driven? Are your staff opposed to having to SELL? One of the biggest challenges for senior managers today, is to introduce a Sales Culture into an organisation that has not, by tradition, been involved in selling.

The answer to this dilemma is to encourage our staff to, *Switch on their Selling Power*, by using their natural abilities in a confident, professional and profitable way.

## Harnessing nature's gifts

From the moment we start to communicate, we attempt to persuade others to take the actions we want. We implore, reason, encourage, threaten, cajole, seduce, tempt, charm and a host of other actions in order to try to achieve this.

Just take the example of getting our children to clean up their room or eat their greens. Getting our partner to agree to accompany us to a movie he or she doesn't want to see or encouraging our staff to perform an unpleasant or tedious task.

Despite its vital role in business, some staff instinctively feel selling is not quite their thing; and even those employed as professional sales people try to cover up their function with euphemisms such as Territory Manager, Account Executive, Marketing Consultant, etc. However, in today's extremely competitive marketplace, organisations have to actively 'SELL' their products and services to their clients.

## The Erroneous Zones

Another reason some business professionals (especially those from IT and finance), find it so difficult to 'SELL' is their 'personality style'. These industries attract people who are very cerebral, analytical, and task-orientated, rather than people-orientated.

The tired old jokes about the (lack of) interpersonal skills of accountants or computer boffins may not be entirely groundless!

It follows therefore, that when faced with the prospect of having to establish a relationship with clients (you know – all that warm and fuzzy stuff), the analytical-thinker feels uncomfortable.

During their careers it has been necessary for them to mainly function in the left (analytical) side of their brain. While this ensures they are technically competent, it doesn't suffice in today's business climate.

## The professional salesperson

Today, there is a whole new breed of sales person in the market place. Selling is no longer the job you do when you haven't got a job. It's the job you do because you enjoy it. It's a job that requires specific skills and knowledge and a high level of expertise to

utilise them. Old selling techniques no longer meet today's challenges. Instead of simply trying to sell, we are reaching for a higher plateau by providing *solutions* to people's *problems*.

The essence of selling is the people involved. It focuses on effective two-way communication. Today's professional sales person is:

- A good listener – rather than a good talker
- A good questioner who encourages people to talk honestly about their needs
- Genuinely interested in people
- Good at gathering information and using it to help people satisfy their needs and solve their problems.

Selling is all about using our natural abilities to identify which features and benefits our customer really wants and then helping them to make the right decision.

"Selling isn't something you do to people – it's something you do with people through effective communication and sensitive interaction."

*Jan Burnes is one of Australia's leading Business Communications Trainers. She runs practical, highly effective workshops on "Professional Selling Skills".*

*Tel: (02) 9974 4899*

*Email: [jburnes@businessinaction.com.au](mailto:jburnes@businessinaction.com.au)*

*Website: [www.businessinaction.com.au](http://www.businessinaction.com.au)*

## EXPLORING THE SALES MYTH

In our, Professional Selling Skills, workshop, one of the first activities we get participants to do is to consider how they feel about themselves (and other sales people) by completing the following questionnaire:

Answer YES or No to the following questions:

- *I would feel offended if someone introduced me as a 'Sales Rep'*
- *Most salespeople do not let you get a word in edgeways*
- *People can usually be persuaded by a good talker*
- *The role of a salesperson is to convince me that I need what they are offering*
- *Good salespeople need to be extroverts and able to dominate the discussion*
- *Sales people avoid any objections I may have*
- *I do not enjoy being 'sold to'*
- *I think men are more suited to the demands of the sales role*
- *I lack the aggression and persistence needed to make people buy.*

The objective of this exercise is to uncover some of the commonly held 'myths' surrounding the profession of selling.