One Question That Matters

How Easy Are You to Work With?

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With few exceptions, most people would choose job satisfaction over job distress by a very wide margin. Although many factors influence job satisfaction or distress, all are driven by either internal or external factors. To be sure, one of the most common external factors is poor leadership where among other things; employees don't feel respected, valued, or significant. While most leaders would agree that there is always room for improvement; they would also agree that internal factors play a significant role in the job satisfaction / distress equation.

Like the external factors, there is a wide range of internal factors that influence the degree to which employees derive meaning or frustration from their work. At the core of the internal factors are attitude and behavior, both of which are choices that have tremendous influence on the *job satisfaction* / *distress* equation.

While writing my first book, I explored the attitude and behavior link to job satisfaction at a very deep level. One strategy that I shared for expanding awareness about attitude and behavior involved taking stock of your reputation among stakeholders. Do they see you as part of the solution *or* part of the problem? Does your attitude and corresponding behavior support *or* inhibit team success? Would you be the first *or* last person they'd want on a new project? What role do you play in your level of job satisfaction or distress?

Although each of these questions can produce valuable insight into the impact of our attitude and behavior, there remains one question that matters which embodies all four. Specifically, ***how easy are you to work with?***

Workplace success for the vast majority of people today is driven by their ability to collaborate. Increasingly, employees at every level are required to interact with and contribute to the efforts of many stakeholders both in and out of the organization. How that collaboration happens or doesn't happen not only influences our reputation but ultimately, our capacity to use our talents and to derive satisfaction from our work.

Answering the question, ***how easy are you to work with*** like any worthwhile endeavor takes more than a single effort. Although there are many aspects or dimensions to the question, it's safe to say that at a foundational level, *personal accountability* encompasses most of them.

At the root of personal accountability is a mindset which acknowledges that doing a job well and with a good attitude is not an unreasonable organizational expectation. In truth, it also plays a huge role in job satisfaction and job impact as well.

Over the last 25 years, I have had countless conversations about personal accountability and its link to job satisfaction with employees at every level. The resulting input helped to identify ten core behaviors that encompass the personal accountability mindset. They include:

1. Accepts responsibility for own performance, success, and development.
2. Displays confidence in decisions and commitments, even under pressure.
3. Is proactive in demonstrating initiative and in honoring commitments.
4. Takes responsibility for knowing what's expected of them.
5. Focuses on finding solutions more than finding problems.
6. Demonstrates energy and persistence in tackling challenging assignments.
7. Supports leadership directives even when not in full agreement.
8. Encourages co-workers to excel in their work and lends support when needed.
9. Takes pride in doing good work and in being a positive role model.
10. Never contributes to the rumor mill.

Taking the time to consider how you model or don't model these accountability behaviors may be the first step in fully grasping the scope of the ***how easy are you to work with*** question. Not surprisingly, there is a direct correlation between your answer to this question and the level of satisfaction or distress you derive from your work.

Seven More Things You Can Do Now to Answer this One Question That Matters

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1. Take the time to consider your current level of job satisfaction. What role do you play (internal factors) and what role do others (external factors) play in this current state? How much of it is within the scope of your control and how much is not? What is one thing you can do to make a shift in the right direction?

2. Initiate a conversation with a trusted friend at work about how easy you are to work with and what they perceive as your reputation among the team and across the organization. What value can you gain from this insight?

3. Identify your top three stakeholders at work and consider what it is that they expect of you. Do you meet these expectations consistently, sometimes, or rarely? What role does your answer play in your current level of job satisfaction?

4. Solicit input from your key stakeholders about their perception of how easy you are to work with. Encourage them to identify one thing you can do *more of* and one thing you can do *less of* to improve your capacity to collaborate.

5. Initiate a conversation with your peer group and or full team about what role personal accountability plays in job satisfaction and team success. Encourage them to add other accountability behaviors to the list of ten presented in this article.

6. Invest the time to not only set doable goals, but also to track your progress. Small, consistent steps in the right direction over time go a long way in improving job satisfaction and impact.

7. Download the free ***Navigator Inventory 2.0*** assessment from the WorkChoice Solutions website and ask your entire team to complete it. Initiate a follow-up conversation around what the scores mean to group success and satisfaction and include a discussion around how the group can help boost the team's overall score. *Click here to download the assessment*.

About David A. O'Brien

David is President of WorkChoice Solutions, a trusted provider of leadership and team effectiveness training, coaching, and consulting services founded in 2000. He works with a wide range of corporate, nonprofit, and public sector clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational effectiveness. His first book, *The Navigator's Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. His second book, *The Navigator's Compass 101 Steps Toward Leadership Excellence* was released in 2016 and is also available nationwide. His third book, The Navigator's Journal is expected to be released in the fall of 2026. To learn more about the scope of David's work in helping leaders and teams to be more effective or to arrange for David to speak at your next conference or other special event, please visit WorkChoice Solutions online at: **www.workchoicesolutions.com** or call him directly at 860.242.1070.