

REMEMBERING WHEN WE DIDN'T KNOW

Avoiding Frustration

My nephew, Corey, is a chef who recently became the manager of a Vancouver restaurant that is in great disarray. In chatting with him, he expressed enormous frustration with the staff. His voice rising, he itemized the list of failings and then said:

“They don’t even know how to make a *hamburger!*!”

To which I gently replied:

“Corey, there was a time when *you* didn’t know how to make a hamburger, either.”

There was silence, as he pondered this and internalized it.

“I guess we forget the circumstances when we didn’t know something which is now almost like second nature”, he thoughtfully shared. He got it.

This lapse in perspective is the cause of much frustration for managers. We leap to the assumption that the fundamentals are universally understood and mastered. We need to think back to when we struggled with the same things, before we were taught or learned how to do something new.

Why should we expect staff to know something, in this instance, how to make a hamburger? Were they born with that innate knowledge and skill?

In a recent discussion with a manager, I related this conversation. She understood it immediately (even though she’s a vegetarian). It helped her gain a different perspective which, in turn, generated a number of ideas for improving her employee’s performance. I told her to steal the image, if it helped. I extend the same offer to you.

In assessing performance, we need to de-construct all the components and determine if a particular element is functioning at sub-standard because of a training deficiency. If so, then a training intervention holds significant promise for improving the performance.

Taking this action will be a much happier and healthier response for a manager, as opposed to being consumed with frustration regarding low performance. It also will help the employee to achieve their performance objectives and become more fulfilled.

As is often the case, managers need to dedicate the time to reflect on and analyze a situation, rather than being caught up in an emotional, reactive response.



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