

## Make difficult people your ally

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As you move up in your professional career, it is inevitable that at one time or another you will encounter difficult people--those who will not communicate with you, not cooperate with you, complain about anything and everything, or maybe even slander you. Some difficult people make life challenging and can have a negative impact on organizational morale. And it is certainly a head-scratcher to see some morale-busters getting promoted to positions or roles where they can impart more of their toxicity onto others. Usually this happens, though, because top leaders in an organization failed to establish or enforce a value system or culture that doesn't consist of these types of people. Basically, they or their human resource department isn't hiring good fits for the organization.

Despite this leadership shortcoming, you can't let the difficult people in your organization drag you down into their negative abyss. You can avoid

their back-stabbing, stubborn ways that bring organizational progress to a screeching halt by taking the high road and exhibiting positive relations with all people with whom you come in contact.

Good supervisors and leaders will manufacture ways to succeed with people who are hard to work with. One particular way is to find some kind of common ground and use it to connect with the difficult person. When I had to deal with difficult people during my career, I would figure out something we both had in common. Whether we were from the same state, drove the same kind of car, cheered for the same sports team, or liked the same types of food, etc., there was always something I could find out that I could bring up at the precise time to infuse into a conversation and get us both talking and agreeing about something. This tactic set the tone for a cooperative spirit as we moved to more official topics concerning the business at hand.

Why does this tactic work? Because it breaks barriers of defensiveness and

opens gates of trust. Difficult people have a tendency to lighten up with people they like or with whom they have similar tastes or interests. For example, a person is more likely to have empathy and understanding with another person after they just discussed the good food they both ate at a restaurant. As their conversation evolves to other topics, there is a much greater chance that these two people will be allies for certain causes.

So do your homework and learn about the difficult people in your organization. Talk to the people they associate with and find out what they like or dislike, are interested in or not interested in. When you discover something that is common ground with you, take note of it and find a way to work that information into your next conversation with them. I'll bet their attitude toward you will begin to change in no time. And soon, those difficult people will become cooperative people and hopefully your ally.

~ The End ~