



Dear Chief

By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: I need advice on dealing with lazy people. I can’t trust them with difficult tasks so I end up giving them the least meaningful things to do. This way I don’t have to worry about their timely and effective results on the more difficult tasks that have most of us pulling our hair out. I can’t fire them “for being lazy” due to bureaucratic union and human resource policies so I tolerate their presence. In fact my hands are tied because the only authority I have over them is handing out their assignments. Is there any effective use for the lazy person? Are lazy people ever motivated?

LAZY MAKES ME CRAZY



DEAR LAZY MAKES ME CRAZY: Lazy people can be a source of high frustration, that’s for sure. And it can even be more frustrating when you don’t have real authority to light a fire under their butts to get them motivated.

There were times during my career

Making effective use of lazy people

when I used to be immersed in fairly restrictive environments where I had to jump through hoops to make a case to fire someone for being lazy. During those times, here’s what I did to make lazy people useful to my mission: When I was challenged with finding super efficient ways to accomplish difficult tasks that I had a limited budget for, I’d ask the lazy person for their input! That’s right. I’d ask them how they would accomplish the task. And many times I would be amazed at what they would come up with—and trust me, it was usually something very quick and easy.

Lazy people do not like working hard so their minds are always stirring for a shortcut that requires the least amount of effort in almost everything they do. Walter Chrysler, founder of Chrysler Corporation, affirmed this when he said: “Whenever there is a hard job to be done I assign it to a lazy man; he is sure to find an easy way of doing it.” I couldn’t agree more.

Now this doesn’t mean I condone a habit of taking shortcuts but sometimes

the lazy person can contribute in ways often overlooked by the hard-charging, complex-thinking go-getter. If you’re pulling your hair out over a difficult task, it can’t hurt to ask the lazy employee how he or she would do it. Ultimately, their suggestion could very well be the break-through and efficient idea you’re looking for. On many occasions, I actually did adopt a method designed by a lazy person, not just because I was desperate at the time, but because it worked and really did save money!

All people, even the lazy ones, have something they do best. Find out what it is and ask them to do more of it. And since most people like doing the things they do best, it is very possible that a lazy person can actually become a motivated lazy person!



For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to www.DearChiefAdvice.com and submit your comments or email them to Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com.