



A Brilliant Example of Influence



Nightmare at the airport

If it hasn't happened to you, you've read about it or it's happened to someone you know: people stranded at a busy airport because their flight was cancelled. It happened to my friend Tom who handled it brilliantly. It's a great example of how to influence others.

Negativity breeds more of the same

When Tom heard the announcement over the PA, his stomach sank. His flight was cancelled. It was late in the evening and, because he's a seasoned business traveler, he knew the chance of other flights being available was pretty slim.

He watched as an all too familiar scene unfolded in front of him. Angry passengers were crowding the airline's customer service desk being exceedingly rude to the unfortunate agents behind it. The agents, who had nothing to do with the cancellation, were losing patience. Tempers were flaring.

Think differently

Tom asked himself, "Who would know how to get me to my destination?" When the answer came to him, he grabbed his coat and briefcase and headed for the first customer service desk he saw that had agents standing behind it. Happily, their flight had just left and they had no customers waiting in line.

As he approached the desk, Tom glanced at the nametag of the agent who made eye contact with him, smiled and asked, "Sarah, can I ask you something?" Smiling back she said, "Of course." In a pleasant tone of voice and without placing blame on anyone or anything, he laid out his dilemma: the flight cancellation, the fact that he needed to be in Detroit in the morning for an important business meeting, etc.

Then Tom posed a brilliant question, "**If you were in my shoes, what would you do?**"

People love to share their expertise

Tom, an executive in his company who had gotten to the C-Suite because of his strong leadership skills had learned a long time ago that people love almost any opportunity to share their expertise. Sure enough Sarah and the other agent Julio couldn't wait to give Tom all of their inside tips and techniques to solve his problem. By the time he left their counter, he had a ticket for a flight that would guarantee his arrival in Detroit long before his meeting started.

Let other people solve your problem

I've written before about unsolicited advice, which most of us don't like to receive. The reason there's so much of it being offered is because we *love* to solve problems, particularly other people's problems. So imagine actually being INVITED to do so. How thrilling! I can see you rubbing your hands together in happy anticipation.

Using influence as a win/win

The next time you have a thorny problem, ask yourself, "Who would know how to fix this?" and then ask them that wonderful question posed by Tom, "**If you were in my shoes, what would you do?**" A solution you might not have thought of may be offered, and the person you ask will be pleased that you recognize his/her expertise.

One caveat

If someone provides a solution and you decide not to use it, or you're not sure, let him/her know. Why? Because some people get offended if they think they've solved your problem and then find out you didn't apply their advice. To avoid this you might say something like, "I really appreciate your thoughts on this. I'll have to make the decision myself but your input helps me think it through."

People love to help

Our society places great value on lending a hand. In the aftermath of natural disasters we see heart-warming stories about these acts of support in the news. If you think of it, many of the fairy tales that were read to us as children involve some kind of rescue scenario. Most of us cut our teeth on this concept.

When you ask people to help, you are giving them an opportunity to do something they enjoy. It is a win/win of the best kind.

Questions:

Your input helps me think through what I want to write about and I value it greatly. If you have time, please comment and answer one or both question:

1. Have you used this approach yourself? What happened?
2. If you used this approach at work, or at home, what do you think would happen?

For more information on having Silver work with your company on leadership and employee engagement, call 877-840-5416 or email: Info@SilverSpeaks.com