

# Marilyn Manning and The Consulting Team's Leadership Tips



## NOTE FROM THE CONSULTING TEAM

*In recent months, The Consulting Team has observed the continuing effects of a sluggish economy on our clients, especially those in government. Tightening budgets have led to personnel cuts. Many valued employees are either retiring or facing lay-offs. The result is difficult for those no longer employed, as well as for those who now face more work with less help.*

*In this issue of Leadership Tips, we share ideas to deal with the stress of this challenging change. The tips and tools we offer can assist in going beyond worry and fear to acceptance, exploration, and commitment to a new path. Our tools can help those concerned about their job future or those who are facing "survivor's guilt" and increased work loads.*

*Our Warm regards,  
Marilyn Manning  
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## Stress Pointers

### *Coping and Overcoming Change Challenges*

***"Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely."***

*~ Karen Kaiser Clark*

Change is inevitable, constant, and sometimes threatening. Good leaders follow proven methods to help relieve their followers' anxiety related to change. No matter what your position in the organization, you can count on change causing stress for you and your team.

In the current job market, layoffs have become a common and major disruptive change. However, managers who can accept today's changes, and plan for the future, following a few simple guidelines.

#### **1. Provide Frequent Information and Updates**

For those facing major change, ongoing communication is key. One cause of stress in layoffs or terminations is that employees are not adequately informed. In an effort to be sensitive to potential layoffs as well as other negative situations, managers sometimes attempt to protect employees from the truth. However, lack of information causes uncertainty and anxiety, which can lead to rumors, gossip, and loss of productivity. A better approach is for leaders to keep staff informed about anticipated changes through planned communications. There's a fine line, however, between keeping people "in the loop" and sending them into panic with too much information. Wise managers know how to strike a balance.

This guideline can be applied even when there is little information to share, to demonstrate that communication lines are always open. Employees will feel more positive and reassured. If you are in constant communication with employees, there should be few surprises. This helps employees feel in better control of their futures.

#### **2. Assign Measured Goals and Provide Feedback**

When employees hear about lay-offs, they may worry about their work performance and whether they will be good enough to survive the cuts. This is where a manager's proactive feedback and healthy performance evaluation system pays off. We all need feedback. The lack of feedback increases stress.

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Most of us can sense when managers withhold constructive comments and would rather hear the "news," good or bad, from the source or their supervisor, rather than through the grapevine.

If you give feedback, use the following process. Tell employees what specific and precise changes in behavior or direction you would like to see. Include specific measurable results. Always check that they understand, and be clear about your expectations.

Remember, communication can produce stress when assumptions are not verified, when emotions are running high, and when we don't follow-up conversations with documentation. We suggest you make agreements, with set dates for meeting goals, and have the employee sign it. An example: "Improve your accuracy to 98 % by June 30, with progress check and problem resolution the first of every month. Meet in my office at 9:00 a.m. for monthly checks and the same time for June 30 wrap-up."

#### 1. Manage Emotions Related to Major Changes

People experience transition stages for all major changes, including layoffs. Imposed change causes more stress. The typical progression in confronting reorganizations, layoffs, or any other major change includes:

**Denial.** People may deny the action or change is necessary or the situation is critical. The employee also thinks, "They won't let me go, I've been here too long." As a leader, it is important for you to accept the change and understand why it is necessary for the organization's survival or success. You can then communicate these realities and help others to also accept the situation.

**Resistance.** People understand negative situations, but often can't or don't take action. They may first blame others for the situation. The manager may think, "If she only finished the qualifying tests, she wouldn't be in this situation." The employee may believe, "It's the manager's fault that I didn't get adequate notice. I could have re-qualified and been protected."

**Self-blame.** Many people go through self-blame. Managers may think, "I should have offered more help." The employee might conclude, "I should have put in more hours."

## Tools of the Trade: Stress Reduction Responses

- ❖ Provide Frequent Information and Updates
- ❖ Assign Measured Goals and Provide Feedback
- ❖ Manage Transition Stages for Major Changes
- ❖ Overcome Guilt Feelings
- ❖ Counter Serious Issues with External Mediators

Managers must monitor their reactions to change and stress. If they deny or resist, it is difficult for them to be effective coaches or leaders. Understand the big picture and strategies to move through to the next stage.

#### 4. Overcome Guilt Feelings

Some people feel a sense of relief once they hear the facts. Keep in mind that a large number of out-placed employees become more successful at another company or occupation. U.S. Department of Labor statistics claim that 52 % of laid off and re-employed people make more money in their next jobs. After layoffs, the remaining staff can experience guilt: "Why them and not me?" Team rebuilding activities can help to remedy these feelings.

#### 5. Use External Mediators to Counter Serious Issues

If the workplace climate becomes a problem, consider calling in mediators. As neutral parties, they can ask leading questions and coach employees how to be prepared and to leave with grace. They can coach survivors to cope with the loss and increased workloads. This investment may make win-win exits possible. Acting quickly with a skilled expert can help restore your team and organization to high productivity and morale.

Our role as leaders is to enable employees to succeed. If we practice effective communication, set realistic, challenging goals, help employees learn and grow, we can become more comfortable with the discomfort of constant change.

# The Consulting Team's Change Challenge Workshops

**The Consulting Team offers several courses to organizations that are facing the challenge of change. Here are some offerings that have been in high demand with our clients in recent month.**

**Coping with Change:** Moving from emotional to reasoned reactions to change requires understanding and skills. This course aids employees to navigate change effectively, learn change management and stress reduction tips, and set personal goals.

**Strategic or Project Planning:** Strategic thinking and outcome-based planning can realign your work group for strategic change. Learn how to develop strategies, realistic objectives, goals, performance measures, and implementation activities. Help your team become more focused and productive with easy to use strategy tools.

**Appreciative Inquiry:** If your organization wants to find its future through innovation, empowerment, and positive potential, then you will want to discover the power of appreciative inquiry to master change and strategic development. This course helps to recognize strengths, access possibilities and potential, inspires collaboration, and increases organization effectiveness and success.

**Communications that Spur Change:** Is your change plan gathering dust on the shelf? Does team resistance stall your progress? You may need to communicate the plan more effectively. This course provides tools to build communication skills for planning and presenting media that support change. Learn to identify your audience and their needs, to manage and overcome resistance, and to use basics of verbal and written communications to meet your strategic goals.

**We offer these workshops as one-hour motivational talks, to half and full day interactive sessions. Call us for a multiple day discount.**

## About Leadership Tips:

**Leadership Tips** is a periodic newsletter to help deal with the difficult issues in today's busy and hectic work environment. To see past **Leadership Tips** go to [www.theconsultingteam.com](http://www.theconsultingteam.com) and select Newsletters

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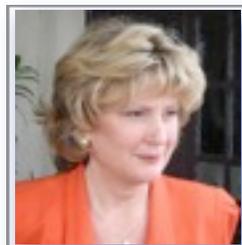
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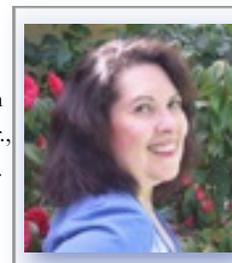
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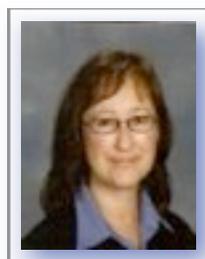
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### *The Consulting Team Leads the Way in Community Service*

**The Consulting Team** stands behind the community it serves by providing pro bono work for charitable and non-profit institutions. Here are some examples from this last quarter where we have donated our services.

**Marilyn Manning:** Besides the many boards Marilyn serves on, she kicked off and facilitated Los Altos Community Foundation's LEAD Program sessions. LEAD introduces and educates future and present leaders on private and public organizations that serve their community. She also mediated pro bono a conflict within a large non-profit organization.

**Ken Braly:** Ken serves on the board of Northern California Chapter of the National Speakers Association and as an officer of Toastmasters.

**Elaine Schmitz:** Elaine is acting as editor/mentor for writers in the California Writers Club who are aspiring to be published in an anthology.

**Lynn Myhal:** Lynn provides pro bono executive coaching and business mentoring for Executive Directors of nonprofit startup green businesses (members of [www.greenforall.org](http://www.greenforall.org)). Green For All's mission: "...dedicated to improving lives of all Americans through a clean energy economy... in collaboration with business, government, labor, and grassroots communities to... increase quality jobs and opportunities in green industry."

**Jerry L. Talley:** Jerry conducted a feedback survey for EdRev 2011, a national conference for parents and educators on children with learning disabilities. He also serves as Board Development Committee Chair for the Board of Family & Children's Services (providing mental health services to uninsured and underinsured children, couples, families in Santa Clara County).