

## Common Sense

"John, how can you be so thick as to not ask if you couldn't figure out how to do it? Don't you have any common sense? Would you have ever finished it if I hadn't come looking for it?" Mark shook his head in disbelief, muttering "Damn it all!" then headed for his office.

At our Tuesday morning coaching meeting with Mark he recounted the incident and all but asked us to join in his exasperation. I asked if he thought John was of value to the company and Mark acknowledged that he often was. We then stepped into one of those difficult conversations, "Since you aren't going to let John go, I doubt that being frustrated with him is going to move him or you forward. Let's develop a specific strategy that you can use to get better results," my partner Jay suggested.

"Mark," I pointed out, "your irritability is probably making people anxious. They may try so hard to avoid confrontations with you that they're spending less time actually solving problems. Let's help you improve your effectiveness as a manager then you can help John solve his problem."

"I don't have time to babysit these people and I don't have time to train them again and again. Why should I treat them nicely if I'm paying them and they aren't producing?"

"Do you have time to keep repeating what you're doing now? It doesn't seem to be working to solve your problem. I'm not sure that shows any common sense," Jay mused with a grin on his face. Mark grinned back at him and the three of us began to work out a new strategy for assigning and following projects, a strategy that required an upfront investment of time, but promised a better long-term payback.

It's easy to see patterns in others, to notice that they keep failing in the same way and trying the same thing again even when it hasn't produced the results they want. It's much harder to notice when we're banging our head into the same wall again and again. Sometimes the wake-up call is the frustration or despair we're feeling.

Falling into a habitual response to a repeating problem is common; it's efficient, but not effective. Trying a new approach when you're frustrated takes effort and makes sense, but isn't as common. Each of us defines common sense as what looks obvious to us.

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Coaching is an opportunity to get an experienced outside viewpoint, and a solution tailored to your strengths and situation. The best coaches can help raise your game to a higher level. Ready to take another step up? Give us a call.