Quadrant II Newsletter

Research shows that the difference between leaders who derail in their career and those that soar to great heights is social skills. Social skills appear in the second quadrant of Stephen R. Covey's Importance-Urgency matrix: social skills are important to a career but not urgent (Covey is author of the top-selling business book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*). Quadrant II provides an opportunity for business and technical professionals to learn and try out new social skills based in science.

23Dec2015, author: Valerie Patrick, PhD, A Surprising Way to Improve Group Performance

Quotable (*Key Message*)

Eating meals with colleagues boosts productivity.

Quantify (*The Science*)

Dr. Brian Wansink, Professor and Director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab; Dr. Carol Devine, Professor in Cornell University's College of Human Ecology; Dr. Jeffrey Sobal, Professor in Cornell University's College of Human Ecology; and Dr. Kevin Kniffin, visiting assistant professor in Cornell's Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management published a research study this month on the impact of eating together on group productivity. The research study involved more than 50 firehouses in the fire department of a large city and was conducted over a period of fifteen months. The research study found that fire platoons that ate most frequently together got the highest marks for team performance. Some excerpts from the published work are as follows (from http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8638-employees-eat-together.html):

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- **"Although the costs that organizations invest to support on-site eating are clearly measured as direct expenses, our research highlights the opportunity that exists to start measuring and optimizing less direct organizational benefits that can be obtained through institutional support for commensality among coworkers."**
- **"This area of investigation carries significant potential as a mechanism to increase work-group performance within organizations by leveraging natural needs to eat when compared with less mundane activities that would require more complicated employer interventions."**

Kevin Kniffin said in a statement that "Eating together is a more intimate act than looking over an Excel spreadsheet together. That intimacy spills back over into work." Kniffin also said, "From an evolutionary anthropology perspective, eating together has a long, primal tradition as a kind of social glue. That seems to continue in today's workplaces."

When firefighters who elected to eat alone in the study were asked why they didn't eat with the rest of the platoon, the firefighters got embarrassed signaling a deeper issue in the platoon.

Qualify (*Put into Practice*)

A working lunch would not count as an "intimate act;" however, catered lunches that are a break from work are recommended by the study authors. Here are some additional ideas that don't impact the work budget:

- **If you are a team leader, then try inviting the team over to your house for a summer barbecue on the weekend. Look up some fun interactive activities or games to play outside or inside to keep folks engaged and give them something to talk about once the gathering is over. One fun game I did at a barbecue was using string to tie around your waist/hips to**

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suspend a raw hot-dog about 5 inches off the ground. Next seeing who could get their hot dog into a narrow bottle/jar on the ground first.

- If you are a manager or executive, try inviting your direct reports to a catered holiday party. Rather than doing any kind of gift exchange, provide the option to donate items to a cause that is meaningful to you (items for a food bank, toys for tots, clothes for veterans, supplies for a pet shelter, and so on). You can also have some fun interactive games.
- When traveling together to a conference or off-site meeting that includes one or more over-night stays, pick a night for a team dinner.

Quip (*Fun*)

A meal that turns into a food fight, like this scene from the movie "Animal House," does not enable an intimate experience. A meal that provides a "safe" environment so people are comfortable sharing personal stories and descriptions would qualify as enabling an intimate experience.

Quest (*Resources*)

Dr. Valerie Patrick, Founder and President of Fulcrum Connection LLC, provides training, consulting, and keynotes on facilitation, teamwork,

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collaboration, creativity, innovation, social intelligence, change management, and thriving on a steep learning curve. Contact Dr. Patrick (valerie.patrick@fulcrumconnection.com or text 412-742-9675) to set up an exploratory call.

Check out the new "Science of Success: Social Secrets" podcast on iTunes here: https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/science-of-success-podcast/id1063826280. Please click on "ratings" in iTunes to provide your input. All comments are welcome and encouraged!

Read about the social skills needed for success in the workplace on the Competent Collaborator Blog here: http://fulcrumconnection.com/blog/navigating-dangerous-waters-at-work-to-achieve-success/.

About Fulcrum Connection LLC

Fulcrum Connection specializes in instructional design, training ,speaking, facilitation and consulting to develop skills in leadership, innovation, sustainability, troubleshooting teamwork, and managing technical professionals.

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