

Introduction

Why this book? People kept asking me for it! I'm in the business of creating and facilitating interactive training programs on diversity, conflict, harassment, leadership, teamwork and change – the so-called “soft issues.” I've been doing this kind of work since the mid-1980s. After almost every program a group of managers and supervisors will come up to me, tell me what a great facilitator I am (thank you!) and ask me if I have a “toolbook” that builds on the work they did with me. “We need a ‘how to’ manual,” they say. “Something to pull off the shelf and use on-the-spot, without a lot of study or hassle.”

Why do they want such a book? Well let's face it, when it comes to training on interpersonal skills, most MBA or corporate management programs fall a bit short of the mark. Sure they'll give you a lot of organizational theory, matrix, and cross-functional management gobbledegook – most of which we tend to forget the moment we leave the classroom. But when it comes to basic, everyday interpersonal interactions like talking and listening, responding to emotionalism, or handling bad behavior, people problems and sticky situations, many managers feel unprepared. They really want practical advice and help. So this is that how-to “toolbook” people keep asking me about.

What's In It? In the chapters at the beginning of the book, which I call the “Primers,” I offer overviews on most of the big issues every manager needs to know about; i.e. managing and motivating people, workplace harassment, diversity and leadership. I've populated these chapters with stories taken from my own experiences working with and for many different kinds of organizations. Of course, the individual names and situations have been changed to protect the innocent...and the guilty.

The mid-section of *Bad Behavior, People Problems and Sticky Situations* is filled with basic, simple, clear and easy-to-use interpersonal management tools and techniques, most of which you can teach yourself to use in less than five minutes. The tools are laid out simply and clearly – so you can follow them step-by-step. In the last third of the book, you'll find a raft of realistic case studies – all based on actual problems my clients have faced – which you can use to develop and test your knowledge and skill.

In addition to reading the book through at least once, I'm also hoping you'll turn to it when you're facing specific bad behavior, people problems and sticky situations and wondering "What the heck do I do?!" To accommodate this use, I've arranged the book by challenge/problem and cross-referenced each one with tools to make using it that much easier. If you're in a real hurry, check the "Index by Problem."

Do The Tools Work? My clients tell me they do. Every tool in this book has been tested and tried many times in many different types of organizations, including big and small companies, city, county, state and federal government agencies, and non-profit organizations like health care groups, colleges and universities. Most people report back that the tools were simple, easy to use, and actually worked with a fairly high success rate.

Can I guarantee they'll work for you? Sorry I can't; simply because people are human. Not everyone uses the tools exactly the same way, and not everyone responds to the tools in the same manner. However, in general, I've found if you use the tools as instructed after practicing them with a trusted colleague, the situation you're addressing will improve and/or be less stressful for everyone.

Will It Hurt? Well, that depends on your pain threshold! Seriously, there's no question that using most of these tools will require you to be clear, patient and occasionally blunt. If you're "risk" averse and/or you're constantly trying to avoid confrontations, then sure some of these tools – like "Straight Talk" – are going to be tough for you to use. But don't forget, if you're a manager, supervisor or team leader, sooner or later you're going to face some bad behavior, people problems and sticky situations that require your attention and action. These tools are designed to help get you through those situations as cleanly as possible.

What If I Need Help? It's always a good idea to ask for help or guidance from someone with experience before wading into any sticky situation. Again, I recommend you practice using these tools on a colleague before you use them in real life. When in doubt about anything, always talk to a human resources or legal professional about the problem before attempting to handle it yourself. They might take the problem off your hands or offer to let you practice using the tool on them. If you don't have an HR or legal person available to you, or one with whom you're comfortable, then work with a higher-level manager with lots of experience, people skills and street smarts. They've probably seen your problem before and can give you help and guidance.

If you get stuck, or have a specific question, or need coaching, e-mail me at gward@orlandoward.com, and I'll try my best to respond in 24 hours.

One Last Note. The United States is the most litigious society in the history of civilization. More people are suing each other, and their employers, for more things than ever before. As a manager or supervisor, whether you like it or not, your responsibility is greater than that of a line employee and sooner or later, you will be called upon to handle bad behavior, people problems, sticky situations and make tough decisions. The outcome of some of these problems could be challenged in court, with you sitting in a witness box or – even worse – at the defense table.

We strongly urge you to document, document, document everything you do. Whenever you get involved in handling bad behavior, people problems and/or sticky situations, make a note of the problem, the date and time, the people involved, what they said/did and what you said/did in response. In the event of a lawsuit, those notes may be your best protection.

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