

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS ANNUAL REPORT

2014

During the calendar year the Ombudsman met with **39 faculty** (23 male, 16 female), **36 staff** (23 female, 13 male), and **3 graduate students** (2 female, 1 male).

Three staff matters were continuances from the previous year, although it is difficult to know when a case has been fully resolved. Each is a distinct and unique situation with one or multiple parties and counted only once, although there may have been several meetings and on-going involvement and communication.

**Interactions with University Groups
by the Ombuds Office**

JanuaryCampus Environmental Committee — .discussion on workplace bullying

FebruaryDental School — communication workshop for 12 staff

Hotel Louisville — 6 week training in basic mediation skills for staff

Steering Committee — .conversation and lecture on workplace bullying

Dean of Students — discussion of expanding ombuds services

MarchV.P. Information Technology — discussion and plan to address climate

College of Business — conversation with 5 staff about culture concerns

Unit Business Managers — presentation on services of Ombuds Office

Dept. of Psychiatry — Culture Day presentation to foreign students

AprilPeace, Justice & Conflict Transformation — discussion with students

Delphi Center — all staff 2 hour training on civility

May12 sessions with IT staff to discuss survey results

Athletics — ticket office staff interactions (6 sessions)

JulyConversation with Mitchell Payne about a troubled department

Advisor to bullying policy committee

August.....Begin discussions with department staff (20)

SeptemberBegin graduate class in Urban and Public Affairs (pro bono)

Begin undergraduate class PEAC 350

Meet with Dean of Students staff to discuss student mediations

November.....2 hour training for physical plant department

College of Education — Diversity Committee discussion on bullying

Decembermeetings with several faculty members within department at request of chair

Trends and Patterns

Corporate kindness has always been the exception but in the past few years many large brands are embracing socially kind deeds in compassion as an unusually effective means to market themselves to consumers, employers, and even stockholders. Some are listening to their hearts, while others are attuned to social media chatter and creating consumable spin. Nevertheless, there is one audience that is watching closely — millennials. This group will soon overtake baby boomers as the largest classification, and the trend-setting class of about 95 million people born between 1982 and 2004 live and breathe social media and are broadly convinced that doing the right thing is mandatory. Our university should be aware of the social mores of its customers, and compassion is a rapidly growing influence in the workplace and in personal and professional interactions.

About 75% of the matters referred to the Ombuds Office relate to simple human failings within interpersonal interactions, like recognition, communication, and trust. There's a reason why only about 30% of the American workforce are engaged in their work, and it seems to reflect on the managers. We must teach managers and supervisors to focus on interests and not positions, that perceptions can blur their vision, that listening is very important, and that emotions play an important role in everyday behavior. Emotional intelligence skills can be learned and are essential for leading. People who work together have different perceptions and experiences, and it would be unnatural if they did not disagree from time to time. The conflict generated can be a first step on the road to improving communication, solving a problem, and even building trust and cooperation.

More people are suggesting to me that they are being targeted by a bully colleague. Bullying at work is more crippling and devastating than all other work related stress. When 27% of the American workforce report being directly and adversely impacted by

workplace bullying and another 21% witness it (Zogby, 2014), we must address this phenomenon. Workplace bullying can also be described as harassment, aggression, hostile work environment, incivility, disruptive behavior, and mobbing, but it is an escalating process during which an individual in an inferior position becomes systematically targeted by negative social actions repeated over time with intent to inflict harm. It is neither chance nor destiny, but the interplay between individuals in their daily work interactions. Bullies are motivated by justification, entitlement, integrity, and self-righteousness, all admirable characteristics when not associated with the tremendous damage and trauma bullying causes.

Compassion and the Role of the University Ombudsman

The intrinsic quality we all possess is to strive toward being the best we can be. This quality makes us more creative, informative, thoughtful, and industrious. We are aware and informed of external factors in technology, science, medicine, arts, and existing in a world with data driven decision making. External studies have given us greatness but not the answers to essential questions, which are why am I here, what is my purpose, and what is my role? This internal conundrum can be motivating for confident and secure individuals who believe their assumptions, but most seek answers and guidance through daily grinds and duties, while interacting with others who may also suffer confusion and ignorance. The intersection of wants, needs, and expectations is where we interface with others — it can be a workplace, a home, or anywhere where continuing relationships occur. Recent developments in brain science reveal that humanistic factors determine success, engagement, and happiness within the workplace when compassion is practiced. Not many aspects of human experience are as powerful as the desire to be understood and to understand. Regardless of title, tenure, or position, employees who voluntarily leave generally say it is because of some disconnect with leadership. People who are challenged, valued, engaged, and recognized will stay and contribute, because money is not a motivator to stay. Social scientists have found we are born to interrelate and humans enjoy a dedicated neurobiological system that is responsive to social bonds and fosters other-interested feelings and behaviors. Care and compassion are not separate from being professional or doing the work of the university but are a natural and living representation of people's humanity in the workplace.

The traditional approach to management hasn't changed significantly in the last few decades. We often treat workers like a commodity and attempt to get as much from them as possible with an eye to the bottom line. Leadership wants critical thinkers, collaboration, and creativity, and people want to grow in their role, feel fulfilled, and appreciated. I see far too little compassion at our university.

The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones.

— John Maynard Keynes

Compassion in the workplace is essential for durable, satisfying, and rewarding relationships and can be achieved through productive communication, understanding, and respectful interactions. A policy that states we must be respectful of others, not bully, and treat colleagues with dignity is only a piece of paper if it is not practiced. People naturally engage in conflict and this is good if it leads to something better like understanding, guidance, insight, or explained expectations. When conflict is not properly managed it causes discomfort, becomes chronic, and interferes with performance. This destructive pattern impedes our reasons for being here, diminishes relationships, and causes disengagement. These negative characteristics are far too common with managers who have limited emotional intelligence and necessary skills in listening and productive communication. Skills can be learned but the culture must support compassionate management.

Individuals may meditate to raise their level of awareness to find internal excellence or practice mindfulness to reduce stress, but the one skill most often missing is the ability to listen to understand versus listening to respond. The University Ombuds proposes specialized training in compassionate mediation for all managers in conjunction with a workplace bullying policy. Preventing all bullying is noble, but it is not possible. Defining bullying is essential, and behaviors and actions that meet the definition must be changed, and the individual educated. Nevertheless, most unhealthy workplace interactions do not rise to the level of bullying. It is unmet expectations, miscommunication, lack of guidance (leadership), or refusal to address the essential questions that are common and ubiquitous to this and other workplaces.

The University of Louisville should be the leader in promoting a best place to work in this compassionate city. Authenticity in relationships is attained when a person feels listened to, is affirmed, and recognized. Managers must have skill sets to address difficult people and analyze disruptive behaviors from a compassionate perspective, with separation of the person from that behavior. Compassion can be honest answers to

necessary questions. When compassion exists in personal and professional relationships, almost everything else is easier and more comfortable to achieve, including problem solving and conflict resolution. When our actions are consistent with our words, compassion can be achieved and arises from our interdependence with others to achieve outcomes we value. Because compassion cannot be compelled, social interactions are valuable as a foundation for confidence or belief one feels toward another or others to overcome doubt or fear.

Compassion can be empathy and the ability to collaborate and emotionally relate to the feelings of another, even when you do not agree with the person's opinions or interpretations. It is also empathy and the ability to relate to your own thoughts, emotions, and behavior without being imprisoned by them in decision-making during conflicts with stress, anxiety, or other strong emotions. In conflicts the fight or flight impulse causes us to create a distance between ourselves and our adversaries to avoid harm or discomfort and most of us flee in one way or another. Compassion, a win-win outcome, delivers the ability to avoid or resolve damaging conflict and form relationships within the workplace that impacts the core of every organizational function.

Compassion breeds trust and in the transactions of the workplace that trust must be reciprocal, that is, you have to give it to get it. It is given by involving others and seeking their input for decisions affecting their work and lives; by telling the truth, sharing information, and speaking with good purpose; it is managing expectations and delegating with requisite resources and authority. Trust is vital to individual, team, and overall organizational performance. With trust created through compassion, people are better equipped to make informed choices and targeted decisions for action, and success will surely follow.

Universities are social systems in which people are strongly influenced by the prevailing culture, and the most potent tool for improvement is cultural change with a goal to increase the long-term health and performance of the university, while enriching the lives of its members. Core values to promote trust, diversity, personal and professional growth,

mutual respect, and constructive communication are absolute requirements in a vibrant and healthy workplace. The preservation of workplace relationships, resolution of disputes, advocacy in conciliation and early intervention with compassion based approaches to conflict are attainable through training, education, and coaching.

Recommendations

I recommend a service of executive coaching to any dean, department chair, or mid-level manager in interpersonal relationship skills. Professor Lyle Sussman, College of Business, has designed a program to serve the needs of managers relating to human interactions. The assistance given is confidential and coaching relationships can extend indefinitely as necessary, while the manager develops new skills to manage people. Because a recent Gallop poll found only about 30% of the workforce is actively engaged in their jobs, we must offer more support to managers to positively manage others. According to a Towers Watson worldwide study, the one essential aspect of engagement is whether or not workers believe their managers genuinely are interested in their well-being and less than 40% feel that support. The next generation of workers we hope to attract will not tolerate a work environment that does not acknowledge and support their needs. Money is not a long term motivator, and good employees will leave if they feel unappreciated and not listened to. Organizations that do not change will be at a competitive disadvantage. Leaders must engage their employees' creativity, challenge their intellect, develop their skills, give them a voice, recognize their contribution, increase their responsibility, and keep commitments.

A recent study for the federal government found that effective leadership is an important element to employee engagement and satisfaction. Managers can demonstrate effective leadership through delegation of decision making authority, which is a very good method to develop people through the feeling and sense of belonging. When a manager places control into the hands of employees at all levels, immense creative power is unleashed, but why are leaders reluctant to tap into this rich resource? Leadership should not be about the manager making all the important decisions. Disengagement occurs when

people most familiar with the situation or issues surrounding the decision are not asked their opinion or given the opportunity to offer perspective or comment on the problem. Top down leadership that reflects a “command and control” mentality of leadership can breed disrespect and resentment. These negative emotions foster disengagement or worse.

An enlightened workplace recognizes its people, communicates in a respectful fashion, and encourages trust. Stressed, overworked, or unhappy people cannot be creative or productive. There are certain workplace conditions that drive innovation and engagement. Recognition of people who go beyond the expected and strive to improve the product or service should be a part of strong leadership. These role models encourage others to achieve and seek excellence. Leaders should offer opportunities for personal and professional improvement to cultivate a best place to work culture. Communication involves listening and this empowers people to speak and share their ideas and suggestions for improvement. Respect is not automatic with a title but must be gained and maintained. People who work together know a phony from an authentic leader and respond accordingly. Just because one has the power to make others feel inferior, embarrassed, humiliated, or demeaned does not mean this form of incivility should be employed.

Researchers at the University of Akron and Michigan State University developed the Workplace Arrogance Scale (WARS) to identify arrogant tendencies and mitigate them and the resulting problems in the workplace. Arrogant bosses often cause employee turnover and bring about a negative overall work atmosphere. This can occur when arrogant managers attempt to prove superiority and competence, such as:

- Placing a personal agenda ahead of the company’s agenda
- Demonstrating different behaviors with subordinates and supervisors
- A pattern of discrediting others’ ideas to make them look bad (bullying)
- Recurrent rejection of constructive feedback (bullying)
- Exaggeration of personal superiority to make others feel inferior.

Merely because one has the power to make others feel inferior, embarrassed, humiliated, or demeaned does not mean this form of theft of motivation and engagement should be tolerated. It is counter-productive to use intimidation or bullying techniques on anyone, and especially those on whom leadership relies on to get the job done. Stealing energy from co-workers is a type of workplace theft that drains resources and adversely impacts the organization.

The University of Arizona College of Social and Behavioral Sciences has recently launched their Center for Compassion Studies, the nation's first formalized collegiate center for compassion studies. The center will offer cognitively based compassion training classes, undergraduate courses, and partnerships on campus and in the community. Their goal is to support contemplative pedagogy and effective management of stress to help contribute to a culture of compassion.

U of L's Demonstration

The Information Technology Department, working closely with the University Ombuds Office has initiated a program to establish Trust Leaders within its seven units. The program consists of informing/educating all leadership and the election of one Trust Leader from each unit to act as an advisory group to the Vice President of Information Technology. The elected Trust Leaders will serve one year terms and are given additional compassionate mediation training along with the immediate leadership team to the VP. The training consists of:

Expectations: Seminar participants are encouraged to reveal conflict management styles and experiences and to engage in discussions about a compassionate workplace.

Description: Participants will learn about interest-based negotiation, moving from divisiveness to synergy, adversarial to collaborative communications, compromise to consensus, threats and solutions to interests and needs, combativeness to mutual problem solving, and transformative practices to bring about healthy change.

Objectives: This seminar is designed to improve communication and listening skills in order to move from win-lose outcomes to win-win results in negotiations and interactions. Some issues considered in seeking to better deal with conflict are:

- Increase positive information flow to increase productivity and performance

- Solve problems by clarifying real issues
- Resolve conflicts and manage disputes between people
- Recognize hidden verbal and non-verbal messages
- Exhibit mutual gains negotiation skills
- Employ positive listening skills
- Respond to the problem and not the person
- Hearing (understanding) what people mean, not just what they say
- Dealing with rather than avoiding conflict
- Moving from unhealthy to healthy power
- Relationship detox

Methods: Interactive participation, small and large group discussions, simulations and role play exercises.

Trust Leaders are trained to not react, deal with feelings, attack the problem and not the person, practice direct communication, look past positions to the underlying interests, and focus on the future. The Trust Leader experiment educates and trains the workplace in collaborative arts and advocacy skills for recognition and early intervention of conflict resolution. The preservation of workplace relationships, resolution of disputes, advocacy in conciliation and early intervention, and interest based approaches to conflict are attainable through training, education, and coaching.

Many everyday types of workplace conflict are constructive if the participants interpret and choose to deal with the conflict that way; outcomes can be positive or negative. There are disputes that grow out of prejudice, ignorance, cultural traditions, or misplaced aggression, and these are disruptive as well as destructive. Conflict management training provides employees the ability to deal effectively with all types of conflict situations. Much like preventative medicine, raising self-awareness relative to conflict minimizes its harmful effects. This way, training becomes proactive and serves a preventative role in eliminating the discomfort of non-productive communication or destructive conflict. Self-aware managers and workplace leaders are more likely to attend to issues early in the conflict cycle, thereby maintaining healthy relationships and productive communications.

Recommendations Summary

I recommend that the University:

- Utilize services like Professor Lyle Sussman proposes to coach department chairs on how to better manage their departments and become effective leaders;
- Offer training courses with certification in conflict management to all employees;

- Encourage departments or units within the university to model the program developed by the Chief Information Officer consisting of Trust Leaders and Compassionate Mediation;
- Enact a Workplace Bullying Policy with an emphasis on education, training, and rehabilitation and not punishment (separate the person from the behavior);
- Encourage deans and department chairs to utilize the Ombuds' simple online survey tool to allow all employees to express themselves, measure the level of compassion, and engage in dialogue facilitated by the Ombuds Office to improve their workplace culture;
- Encourage and allow meditation during working hours for all employees (this is a proven and effective method to reduce stress, improve health, and create collaboration).

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