



Quick E-Tips



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Thank you for subscribing to this newsletter brought to you by International Advantage® - *Leading Across Cultures*SM. Every month we bring you tips to help your team and organization, especially those operating in culturally diverse environments, reach their business goals.

Topic of the month: How to eliminate "sandwich jams" and bottle necks in your team

At a Subway shop I ordered a 12 inch sandwich. I was absolutely amazed by the speed and efficiency by which the tall, young employee gathered and assembled the main ingredients. He was fast. (Having ordered my share of Subway sandwiches, I know sandwich speed when I see it.) So I tell him, "Wow, that was quick!" and he proudly reported that he had recently ranked among the top in sandwich-building speed in a nationwide Subway restaurant competition.

But as he slid the sandwich to the next employee for completion with vegetables and payment, I lost all the benefit of the warp speed, and was out the door in the normal time frame...maybe another 5 minutes.

As a consultant who specializes in making teams more efficient, I often run into these bottle necks. In teams, the bottlenecks tend to be individuals who do not ascribe to the majority view or who are marginalized (or some other symptom of team dysfunction.) The client never benefits from star performers and internal efficiencies when teams do not address these bottleneck issues.

5 tips to eliminate bottle necks (or slow sandwich-building) in teams:

1. Assume that anyone who disagrees (the bottleneck) does so for a valid reason. It almost always is.
2. Ask the person resisting to explain his/her hesitation by saying something like "Tell us what we are missing regarding this issue."
3. Listen and ask questions.
4. Fully support that person in front of the group (including restating what you heard him/her say and ask for confirmation).
5. Put the responsibility on the *group* to address the different perspective that has surfaced. Avoid creating an atmosphere that puts the dissenter in the polar opposite position from the majority and promotes defensiveness. Instead work with the majority to understand and address the concern.

Bottom line: Ignoring resistances and moving forward anyway will always cause bottlenecks at a later time.

Double bottom line: In healthy teams, the group should be held responsible for responding to each other's resistances, for supporting each other and for integrating differing bits of wisdom.

Give me a call (623-516-2482) if I can do a "Team CheckupSM" in your organization to identify and resolve bottlenecks or inefficiencies that you may be experiencing.

What comments do you have on the subject? I would love to hear from you, and include your comments (with permission) in next month's edition.

On the Personal Side

Maybe I need to get out more! (...of my hotel room, that is!)

I am curious. Why is it that hotel employees in Mexico are repeatedly knocking on the door for various reasons? In my latest experience, the first employee wants to know if there is laundry, the next wants to know if the room is ready to be cleaned, the next wants to know if the room was cleaned, the next wants to know if the room is occupied... Of course, these all are normal questions, just seems like lots of people needing to know and lots of knocking.

In my experience, this practice starts around 9:30am and goes on until about 3pm. (Of course this is only a problem if you are in the room during the day... you know, when you need to get some work done!) I am wondering if your insights match my theory (which I will share next month). Any insights out there?

P.S. I recently read that every interruption costs you an average of 7 minutes to re-focus on the task at hand.

What's news

Just back from Guadalajara, Mexico and I send my congratulations to all the talented, executive MBA participants of the intensive class "Organizational Culture", held at the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores del Occidente (ITESO), in Guadalajara, Mexico. Everyone was up to the challenge of simulations, the tour and organizational culture analysis of the food product company (the subject of next month's Quick E-Tip) as well as real life practice on how to coach peers and colleagues.

Topics of leadership and building effective teams seem to be on every business executive mind throughout the Americas! What about those of you working in Asia? In your experience, is there also high interest in those topics?

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To your success around the globe,

Lisa

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