

BUSINESS ETHICS SEMINAR PAPER

DEALING WITH ANGER IN BUSINESS AS A LEADER

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INTRODUCTION

Anger is an undesirable situation, in that anger and behaviors associated with it constitutes a problem for individuals and society. According to Charles Spielberger anger is an "emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage" (Spielberger, 1983). It is often considered as a common experience in everyday life (Averill, 1982)

Anger is usually associated with the experience of physical effects including increased heartbeat, blood pressure and adrenaline levels. A person experiencing anger can show openly in facial expressions, body language and sometimes through physical aggression. It is considered natural innate and a fundamental emotion of human beings.

Many views have been expressed as to its effects. It is the position of others that anger has its desired effects because it is a way for human to express his or her negative feelings suppression of which can be damaging. That unexpressed anger can lead to increased hostilities, harm the individual's function and social cohesion, and hinder achievement of goals. To others anger is a sign of mental health. It helps to defend what is right.

However, anger on the other hand is usually the source of conflict, annoyance, tensions of all sorts and dissatisfaction. It has the potential to trigger frustrations, disaffection and physical abuse everywhere including the workplace and its negative effect on productivity.

In all these the most important is for leaders to acknowledge existence of anger and find effective ways to deal with it to avert its negativity leading to aggression, hurt, misunderstandings and confusion especially in business. Leaders in business has the responsibility to help themselves and help other employees to manage and control their emotions and anger for harmony. Anger should in no way be allowed to rather control the individual.

Leadership entails a lot of work to bring the best out of workers to ensure the best output as much as possible for success. The leader is vested with managerial power and involves in strategic outcomes, employee management and other demanding business processes to get the work done. The load of work, employee behavior and eminent loss of targets, for example, can potentially lead to charged situations capable of causing emotional stress for a leader to lose his/her temper. The resultant expression of anger, usually through a form of outburst, seemingly natural yet can be damaging to the reputation of a leader and derail expected business outcomes. According to Mark Twain, 'anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which is stored than to anything on which it is poured'.

Being a team leader in a business set up or being the overall leader of the entire company, it is to be expected that situations will crop up that can get one frustrated. Such occurrences can be upsetting and if care is not taken can lead to explosive expression of anger.

TYPES OF ANGER

Passive aggressive - This one is the most avoidant type of anger and arguably the most irritating to those around such person. It indicates the person's unhealthy relationship with this emotion, believing that it's inherently wrong, punishable, or socially unacceptable. It can stem from certain childhood traumas, such as being forced to bottle up all the negative emotions. This type of anger can be much more emotionally and physically draining to the one expressing it than the more overt types. It can be expressed by silence treatment, sarcasm, procrastination, or mockery.

Volatile / Sudden - This type of anger comes as if out of nowhere. It's an impulsive reaction to whatever is perceived even the tiniest bit annoying. Because it's so unpredictable, it can eventually force everyone around such person to walk on their tiptoes or avoid the person altogether. And rightly so, as this sort of manifestation of rage can be very destructive, emotionally, and physically.

Deliberate - This type of anger is one of the positive ones. This is used as a technique by managers, coaches, leaders, activists, and other people whose interest is to hype up, motivate and prepare their teams or audiences for a battle, a game, a protest, or a personal transformation.

Behavioral - This type of anger manifests in a very straight-forward way – physically. An enraged person can physically attack someone or start smashing and breaking inanimate objects. Such a person tends to act first and think later. The emotion can be very overwhelming and vanish as suddenly as it appeared.

Self-abusive- This type is the one driven by covert shame, guilt, and low self-esteem in general. It can be expressed indirectly by negative self-talk, substance abuse, physical self-harm, and disorderly eating patterns. It can also manifest in rage outbursts towards others, which only deepens the feelings of loneliness, alienation, and guilt.

Chronic- This type indicates the long-lasting and unresolved emotional issues. These manifests themselves indirectly by constant frustration and resentment towards others and, often, towards oneself. This type of person is likely to be described as bitter, mean, or spiteful. It can seriously affect a person's mental, emotional, and physical health.

Addictive / Habitual- This type of anger is closely connected to the adrenaline and dopamine rushes that a person experiences when enraged. This is a sort of natural "high" that can become emotionally and physically addictive. Also, the powerful stance over others also chips in the need to repeat this scheme of communication. Just like with most addictions, they grow from habits and eventually take over the wheel of control. Such communication patterns can usually be seen in other members of the family, so it could have been learned at home.

Moral / Judgmental- It manifests as righteous indignation at someone else's actions that are perceived as unjust, wrong, or incorrect. These people see themselves as natural moral compasses and they just can't look the other way when something not according to the rules is happening just in front of their eyes. This is not necessarily a destructive type of anger, as it can be harnessed and focused to make a greater change. But such a person is at risk of alienation.

This type of anger can also be a feature of certain personality types and a characteristic of Asperger's syndrome. (Audra Bajori 2019)

1 THE FOLLOWING ARE BEST PRACTICAL WAYS TO HELP YOU DEAL WITH WORK SITUATIONS THAT CAUSE YOUR TEMPER TO FLARE UP AS A LEADER.

1.1 Pause and take a break

When situations get that bad and make you feel like yelling or speak in anger, exercise control of your emotions and excuse yourself from the scene. Do not talk to express your disappointment and disgust on the spot. Manage to postpone the expression of dislike and do so when you cool down with the passage of time.

The host of the television show, 'You Bet Your Life, Groucho Marx, once offered an advice to a contestant on his show in these words 'If you speak when angry, you will make the best speech you'll ever regret'.

Withdraw with words like, 'I think I am not happy with this situation, but we can consider the solution later'. The temptation to speak out when angry and at the time when the emotions center of your brain is activated, should be avoided with the maximum restraint. It doesn't make you think straight and properly before acting, few minutes or a daybreak, if possible, can help you gather yourself together to appreciate the situation and to appropriately give a productive response.

Avoid responding to a written communication in an angry mood. The response so composed should not be sent especially when it has been influenced by the wrong emotions of resentment, vilification, and frustration. Hurtful words once sent cannot be undone.

In anger the adrenals are high, and state of mind is disturbed making it difficult to think clearly. Your line of argument is distorted, and choice of words are limited. In this state of mind, you are likely to fail to recognize the implications and obvious consequences of your utterances and behavior until you settle down thereafter. Being rational when angry is exceptional trait of just a few leaders and all leaders should aspire to achieve this feat.

1.2 Accept and acknowledge your anger

Failing to accept and appreciate your own shortcomings in the way you react to stressful situations means finding an antidote can be difficult. Let it be known to your staff that you are human and that you can sometimes go off under duress. Acknowledging and sharing your vulnerability is a plus as a leader. Do not try to shift the blame on another person as being the cause or deny the fact that you are angry when the signs are clear.

Do not leave your unwanted emotions to stand. Accept who you are and find ways in dealing with it. This reminds me of a friend in my country, Ghana, whose emotions trigger as Human Resource Manager severally in a day. He shared this weakness with me as a confidant to find a solution. So, I told him about a 'water therapy' that one of my Marketing lectures taught us in

class to practice in managing hot tempered customers: To hold or get quick access to a bottle of water and remember to sip whenever a customer's behavior seems to trigger your emotions. The water reminds you not to react in equal measure but rather calm down in your answers. This has helped my friend to get his anger and overtime he is able to calm himself down even without the water therapy.

Other alternatives can also be practiced. Breathing exercise work for others. When your own stress levels are high, 'a fast way to regain your cool so you can reappraise is through deep breathing'. Explains Johann Berlin, CEO of TLEX Institute. Sticking to calming words like 'take it easy' by speaking to yourself repeatedly is useful to many.

1.3 Beware of making assumptions

Some upset others not knowing their actions were offensive. To them they were making a cogent statement or acting in good faith. The leader should therefore seek to study and understand people and crust of the matter fully before considering a response or a reaction.

In a face-to-face meeting in personal interactions, the leader should take his time to listen to divergent views to ascertain the facts. This helps to be abreast with the facts and to summarize the appropriate views with a thought through response instead of intermittent outbursts. Refrain from the temptation to get angry at meetings. Sit back as necessary as possible and be master of the meeting in a temperate manner.

Understanding the individual behaviors of staff and their style of doing things is another leadership tool that assists you to appreciate them and how to get the best out of them instead of always paying them back in their own coins.

1.4 Strategize and learn to manage your emotions

Anger is a powerful emotion which can swing one here and there and gets worse when one is stressed up. It requires that the leader trains the mind very well to develop the ability and capability to react suitably for favorable results in stressful situations. It all depends on how best the leader manages emotions. Increasing one's emotional intelligence (EQ) is pivot. Of all the facets of emotional intelligence, emotion regulation may be the 'master skill', said Marc Brackett, director of Yale center for Emotional Intelligence and author of the book, Permission to Feel.

EQ is self-consciousness of how emotions can steer or drive our conduct which in turn affect others both positively and negatively. Emotions have always been an inevitable part of our human make up and it is seen as a disgust by many because of its associated anger factor. Our feelings have effect on whatsoever relationship we are into, being it among peers, families, friends, supervisors, business leaders and what have you. It presupposes that we have no alternative but to skillfully learn to manage our emotions to become a key to success rather than allowing it to mature into that disruptive anger.

Professor Brackett explained that ‘we need to create a paradigm shift on how we view and value our emotions’. He added, ‘We have emotions for a reason. They are a sophisticated and intricate system that we need to tap into’.

A leader who develops the emotional intelligence is strategically equipped to manage emotional members of staff. Such knowledge can equally be used to create self-awareness on the part of the leader. You can impact what you have as a leader for the benefit of other employees.

1.5 Consider leadership training

Learning new skills of doing things doesn’t have an end. Acquiring managerial training in dealing with anger in business is a necessity for success. It is advisable for a leader who is confronted with anger issues to seek help from a certified life or leadership coaching on anger management. This will go a long way to assist the leader to examine and learn the dynamics in dealing with stress and the ability to work in duress conditions. Periodic workshops led by experts is another learning curve for both employees and business leaders alike.

Investment in this area is worth it considering the conducive working environment for the achievement of business goals for which reason huge capital has already been committed.

1.6 Practice self-care

Be at peace with yourself as a leader by having healthy routines. It makes you calm and reduce stress considerably. Inculcate the habit of successful leaders that ensures some self-control.

- a) Commence the day proactively rather than being reactive. Being in reactive mode for the day’s work doesn’t give you enough time to consider best options in decision making as they pop up. Take time to plan the activity of the day before work begins. Your intentions should be clear so that you are well prepared for all happenings.
- b) Put the body in the right condition with adequate rest/sleep eating healthy food, exercise and enjoy the breaks at work in a relaxed manner.
- c) Avoid ‘decision fatigue’, by streamlining routine decisions to avert undermining the quality of decisions.

2 MANAGING OTHERS ANGER AS A LEADER IN BUSINESS

As already established, leaders in business must work on their emotions to be effective in their quest to achieve results. Leaders have working relationship with employees and it is equally reasonable to help their workforce in dealing with their individual emotions and anger.

To create the cordial and serene working environment, it is imperative that the leader impacts the knowledge acquired in whatever way possible to other subordinates for collective benefit. As the saying goes in Ghana; ‘experience is the best teacher’.

Millard J. Bienvenu, Sr. explained, ‘one of the major components of healthy interpersonal communication is the individual’s ability to deal with his or her own angry feelings and those of others’. (Inventory of Anger Communication, chapter 3.7)

2.1 Practical steps in managing others (employees) anger

It is unacceptable for a leader in business and for that matter all leaders to show their muscles based on positional power to suppress others anger or point of view. It is rather destructive.

It is common for leaders' anger or managerial style to be the source of others anger. Do not ignore employees' dissatisfaction, frustration, and anger because it will turn to escalate and make matters worse. Acknowledge the challenge. The positive way to deal with the anger then becomes paramount.

2.2 Show concern

Powerful and effective leaders possess the ability to influence emotions of others. They show concern and share in other people's sorrowful moments. When people are down, they find ways to lift them up with deeds, words and show of empathy showing them the way forward. Employees' dreams and aspirations are taken on board and their difficulties dealt with for the common good of the organization and their selves for a win-win situation. This is by no means an attitude to compromise the purpose of meeting the organizational objectives and goals. It is just a way of making them focused both on jubilant moods and in an overwhelming situation thereby creating a stress-free kind of atmosphere.

a. Acknowledge their feelings

Persons who are angry would want you to know that they are actually angry. Calming them down and at the same time ignoring their feelings may prove futile no matter your good intentions. Marc Brackett wrote, 'It is about the value and importance of emotions and emotional skills. I realized that there is a deeper need in our world to give people the permission to feel all emotions'.

Calm them down with words like, 'I know that you are really upset, and I understand'. Although it may not solve the issue at stake immediately, it calms nerves down for a start. The fact is the leader here may not still be in agreement with the aggrieved persons but then a necessary way of affirming their right to feel the way they feel. Saving the volatile situation from getting out of hand with a touch of humor takes nothing away from the leader and head.

b. Let them know about your feelings

When calmness is restored and the people can think normally and listen properly, that is the time to let go how bad you also felt and how furious you could have also been. Be mea measured in explaining those frustrations and feelings in no confrontational way. In case they were shouting abusively, you can let them know you understand their feelings but then they went too far. And that they could have done better. You can now ask them; 'let us all exercise patience and talk'.

Make your concerns and expectations known in unambiguous terms but still in a way not to hurt others. Don't be bossy and controlling in your delivery. Shun sarcasm to avoid getting on nerves.

c. Clarify and dialogue

Currently give them the chance to speak out and listen attentively. Make sense out of their views and make sure they get to understand the facts and crust of the matter. Interpretations may not be the same, but it is important and critical to agree on the facts and data available.

d. Discuss resolutions for the future

It is better to agree on a resolution as to how things should be done differently in the future for proper and cordial working relationship. The need for all to dip in to discuss emotional issues always should be emphasized.

e. Show appreciation

The moment demands exchange of pleasantries and acknowledgement of efforts from both sides in reaching amicable settlement of the misunderstanding. The meeting should end with the hunger to direct all the energy and goodwill towards the achievement of organizational objectives.

CONCLUSION

Who doesn't get angry at all? Even great business leaders do. The most essential is to have control over anger through its management in the organization. Do not let your anger control you. Put your emotions in check when hurt or feeling uncomfortable about an occurrence.

The ability for business leaders to be masters of their emotions and help others to do so doesn't come easy and automatically. It involves learning and conscious developmental processes, practicing and mental fortitude the benefit of which far outweighs whatever cost one can think of. Adopt leadership style that suits your team, taking into consideration the intelligence level of your team and not necessarily being authoritative or autocratic.

Business leaders should motivate and being strict but careful when tempers are high with choice of words and reaction. This is key for a successful achievement of objectives and goals of the organization.

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