

The Ego

We all have an ego, and at times a very fragile one. We all yearn to feel important. The ego, or the individuality of each person, demands respect, wants approval, and seeks accomplishment. Deep inside every man and woman is a desire for importance and approval. This ego of ours can cause us to act illogically and destructively, or it can cause us to act nobly and bravely. When our ego is starved, we seek nourishment for it in any way we can get it. Feed the hungry ego and it will be more persuadable. This hunger is universal; we need our ego fed on a daily basis. We have to have an affirmation every day that our worth as a human being is still intact and that we are appreciated and noticed. After analyzing many surveys, J.C. Staehle found that the principal causes of dissatisfied workers stemmed from the actions of their supervisors. Those actions included the following, listed in the order of their importance:

- Failing to give employees credit for suggestions
- Failing to correct grievances
- Failing to encourage employees
- Criticizing employees in front of other people
- Failing to ask employees their opinions
- Failing to inform employees of their progress
- Practicing favoritism

All of these causes are related to a bruised ego. This is unfortunate because studies show that employees are most effective when they are recognized for their efforts. Psychologists at the University of Michigan found that the foreman of a construction crew who is interested in the people working under him gets more work out of them than the bossy type who tries to force them to work harder.

In an interesting study, school administrators sought to find the ratio of positive to negative statements overheard in the schools faculty lounges. Thirty-two schools throughout the nation were visited. Now would you be more likely to assume that there were more positive or more negative comments? Negative? Well, you're right, but you may not realize *how* right you are. Researchers were shocked to tally up the statements and find that the ratio was 6% positive statements and 94% negative statements! This is certainly a startling result for those of us who find ourselves in positions of leadership.

When you find yourself in a persuasive situation, it is essential that you seek to enhance your prospect's ego in some way. Too often we present ourselves in a manner that instills feelings of threat, competition, jealousy, and mistrust. When enhancing someone's ego, be sure your praise is sincere and genuine. When we solicit someone's *cooperation*, everyone wins. For example, the sales associate telling the woman she looks great in the dress – what happens in a situation like this? The woman changes back into her original outfit then heads straight for the register! The woman feels great and the associate gets her sale. Or how about when the lady in shipping says she can really tell you've been working out? You do your "Can you tell?" expression and then the next thing you know, you're helping her carry boxes. You get to bask in the glory of someone

announcing that they think you look strong, and then you're extended the opportunity to demonstrate your power and might.

We can all learn from General Oglethorpe's example. The General desired the King of England's permission to establish a colony in the New World. Yet none of his arguments or presentations, no matter how carefully crafted, won the king over. At last, the General had a brilliant idea. He proposed that the colonies be named after the king. Suddenly, the General, had not only permission, but also abundant financial means and even person to help populate the new land.

There is a particular set of ego rules that should be employed when dealing with a superior. If you are trying to impress your boss, you should approach it differently than you would with an employee. Always make those above you feel comfortably superior. In your desire to please or impress them, do not go too far in displaying your talents. Otherwise, you might accomplish the opposite of what you hoped for by inspiring fear and insecurity. When a student outshines the master, there is a blow to the ego. The master wants to appear more brilliant than the student.

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