



Training Tips

Practical Ideas for Maximizing Your Investment In *Walk Awhile In MY Shoes*

Begin with Dialog

After your people have had a chance to read *Walk Awhile In MY Shoes*, schedule group or one-on-one meetings to address the following discussion questions:

- What issues presented in the book have personal significance for you? Why?
- From your perspective as a manager or employee, what other work-related issue(s) would you have included if you wrote this book? What would you have said about the issue(s)?
- What one issue from “the other side” touched you in some way? Why was it meaningful?
- What do you feel is the overall message of the book? What’s it really about?
- How important is that overall message for you? For our organization? Why?
- Does the book apply to anything that’s currently happening in our organization? How so?
- Is the overall message of the book applicable to relationships other than employees – managers? How about employees – employees? Managers – managers? Managers and employees – customers? What about non work-related relationships?

In Your Own Words . . .

Focus on the Native American saying that appears in the beginning of both halves of the book. Ask participants to rewrite the quotation – using their own words. Compare and contrast the different versions. Then pose the following questions: “How could/should these adaptations guide our relationships here at work?” “Why are they so easy to write, but often so difficult to do?”

Understanding vs. Agreement: The Great Debate

Discuss the importance of “understanding” and “empathy.” Focus on the difference between understanding and agreement: You don’t have to agree with someone in order to understand their position and accept the validity of that position (to them). Use an exercise to make the point:

Create a list of non work-related controversial issues (e.g. prayer in public schools, gun control, mandatory military service, bar owners liable for DWI, etc.). Form debate pairs in which one person is truly “for” one of the issue and the other person is “against” it. The “for” person begins the debate by stating his/her position within 60 seconds. The “against” person must listen and then summarize (paraphrase) the speaker’s words before rebutting. The process continues with each summarizing the other before speaking.

After 10 minutes, have the pairs switch positions on the issue and repeat the exercise. Then, process the following questions:

- Did anyone actually change their stand on the issue they debated?
- Even though you didn’t agree, how many feel they were truly able to understand the other person’s position? Why?
- How many feel they were understood by the other person? What makes you think so?
- What was it like to have to argue for the opposite viewpoint? Did you find any validity to “the other side?”
- What can you conclude about “understanding” versus “agreement”?
- What does this exercise have to do with relationships at here at work? What’s the most important take-away for you? How can you apply this back on the job?

“The Rest of The Story”

Want employees and managers to develop a greater appreciation for the difficulty of each others' roles? Try this exercise:

Pair up managers and employees. Have each manager and employee identify a task/function they perform with some frequency. The manager begins by describing – in detail – everything (activities, problems that surface, etc.) he or she thinks is involved in the employee's task. The employee listens, acknowledges, and then responds by completing this statement: **“Here's what you didn't mention. Here's the rest of the story...”** Then, reverse the process. Have the employee describe the manager's task in detail. The manager then responds with: **“Here's what you didn't mention. Here's the rest of the story...”**

When the exercise is completed, ask pairs to share their key learning with the entire group.

There's A Brainstorm Coming

Ask table groups to brainstorm specific actions that managers and employees can take that will help them “meet in the middle and walk the rest of the way together.” Then, have each table group identify and present what they consider to be the three best (and most doable) ideas on their list. Process the results and build a master list. Have the list typed and distributed to all participants.

Consider posting some of the ideas on bulletin boards or including them in your company newspaper. Discuss the ideas at meetings and other training sessions – focusing on “making sure these good ideas become a reality here.” And, if you collect enough ideas from multiple groups, you might want to consider publishing your own handbook!

I Will If You Will

Suggest that each manager schedule individual meetings with the employees that report to them. At each meeting, the manager and employee each identify the single-most- important request/idea from their respective “What I Ask of You” page in the book. (The employee selects from the page in the employee to manager half; the manager selects from the page in the manager to employee half.)

The manager then proposes a mutual commitment to the employee: “If I commit to working on what's important to you, will you commit to do the same for me?” The manager and employee then discuss what each will specifically do to live up to the commitment.

One Picture's Worth . . .

Here's a fun exercise to help hone in on the characteristics and behaviors of EMPATHY:

Ask participants to close their eyes and think of someone who they believe is empathetic and understanding. What does that person do? How does he or she behave? What makes them so considerate of others? What are their characteristics?



Then ask participants to draw a caricature of an empathetic person – with physical attributes, clothes, equipment, etc., that depict the characteristics their person exhibits. For example: reaching out to others might be depicted by drawing long arms and big hands.

Have participants share their drawings with the entire group. Then, address these discussion questions:

- How do the various drawings compare? Any similarities or patterns?
- What specific behaviors can you associate with EMPATHY?
- What effect would this type of person have on you? On others? On our work environment?
- What one thing can you do to be more like your caricature?

“What Else Can We Do?”

Looking for other ways to use *Walk Awhile In MY Shoes?* Try asking the people it's written for! Distribute the books to a small focus group comprised both of employees and managers. Ask them to brainstorm ways the book can be used to help bring positive change to your organization. Besides generating ideas, this simple exercise can establish a model for managers and employees working together.

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The WALK THE TALK® Company
2925 LBJ Freeway, Suite 201
Dallas, TX 75234
972.243.8863 • Fax 972.243.0815

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