

On

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LIFE IN INFORMATION

Fall 2007

THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

*Storage expertise:
Can supply catch
up to demand?*

JIM CHAMPY

*On IT and
business execs*

ESTHER DYSON

*On being the
first to know*

The Other Guy's Shoes

Steve Frigand

**TODAY'S
STUDENTS**
are tomorrow's IT
users, and they
have high
expectations, say
CIOs Ron Bonig
(left) and Jerry
Waldron (right)



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Report from the Future

Much can be learned about the future of IT by studying college students' voracious use of technology. Two university CIOs envision what this generation will expect as they graduate to new roles as knowledge workers and adult consumers.



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By Steve Frigand

Gordon manages a team of 50 people that includes eight direct reports. He has frequently complained to me about two of his staff members: “Why doesn’t Joe get it?” and “Why is Jane on such a different wavelength from me? She never takes my advice when things aren’t going well.”

Gordon told me that Joe and Jane are valuable, senior team members—but he resents spending so much time with just two of them when he has so many other important things on his plate. On some projects he feels that he cannot trust them to get the job done.

Although Gordon is confused as to why these misalignments occur, he has concluded that it must be primarily *their* problem because: (a) he doesn’t have the same difficulty with the rest of his staff, and (b) when he brought up example situations with his peers, they supported him and agreed that Joe and Jane sometimes seem to be on different wavelengths.

Obviously, there is a lot more going on among Gordon, Joe, and Jane. Still, there are general facts about human nature that we sometimes miss when we interact with members of our teams.

1. We are not all “wired” the same way.

Not only do we tend to get along best with people who think and process events like we do, we also tend to hire and promote those with styles similar to our own.

2. We interpret the behavior of others in a way that may be very different from their actual intentions.

Not surprisingly, all of us believe our intentions are positive. Yet we may not see that a reasonable person could interpret our behavior in the opposite way. Such misinterpretation often results in each of us entering into a defensive mode where we end up doing the “I’m-Right-No-I’m-Right” dance.

3. We seldom establish an explicit agreement with our staff members on how we want to work together.

Why do we need specific meetings? Furthermore, how should these be run and supported? What are our roles on various projects? Jane was used to working for a manager who wanted status reports at their one-on-ones. But even at interim points in a project, that manager would reprimand her for asking for assistance or not having everything under control. No wonder she was nervous about her meetings with Gordon and simply wanted to get them over with.

There is an effective way to deal with these three factors: by understanding each other in a respectful way. The old adage “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is admirably effective when working with people who are similar to you. But in a workplace where people have disparate needs and experiences, it is more effective when you do unto others as *they* would have you do unto them.

Getting to know your colleagues’ needs and views saves an amazing amount of time and anguish down the road. When Gordon stopped

trying to get tough messages out to Joe and Jane and instead held a couple of open-ended meetings where he simply tried to understand them, they were much more receptive. Once they felt heard, Joe and Jane wanted to understand and support Gordon’s needs and viewpoints.

How can we conduct conversations that build effective foundations for our relationships? Some questions that I ask executives like Gordon to consider are:

- ✱ **What is most important to accomplish in the next meeting with your employee that will contribute to a long-term productive relationship?**
- ✱ **If your meeting was a total success, how would your employee’s energy or attitude be different from when the meeting began?**
- ✱ **What preparation is needed to maximize the positive outcome of your meeting?**

The most important thing to remember is that we do not need to get the questions or script perfect for an effective conversation. Rather, we need to enter the conversation with a positive attitude and an interest in understanding. That attitude is actually noticed more than the words we use.

Steve Frigand is founder of MetaView Consulting & Coaching and is the Distler Family Endowed Lecturer at Tufts University.

*THE
OTHER GUY'S
SHOES:*

Managing
Your Staff with Greater Ease



GETTING TO KNOW your colleagues' needs and views saves an amazing amount of time and anguish down the road.