SOLUTIONS GROUP

Building Superior Cultures with GR8 Leaders
Engaged – Serving – Self-governing

Magic Phrase

Leaders can help the self-governance of people in an organization. When the leader teaches direct reports to use the Magic Phrase both the leader and the people benefit. The leader benefits by remaining more strategic, gaining additional insights into issues and developing more leaders. The people benefit by growing their technical and leadership capacity, increasing their initiative and personal responsibility and enhancing respect for authority.

The phrase is simple, easy to teach and understand.

"If you have no objections, I want to…"

There are two critical parts to the Magic Phrase – 1) respecting authority and 2) taking initiative.

Respecting authority is critical in any organization. It helps prevent anarchy. Unfortunately, many leaders put emphasis on trying to *make* direct reports respect them. That often creates more rebellion than benefit. Leaders, who understand that direct reports can choose to not respect them even if they were using authority perfectly, are living in reality. That reality helps leaders relate to direct reports better, because they are not demanding respect. Leaders that focus on being respectable are better leaders than those who "require" respect.

Leaders also encourage respect for authority when they provide clear consequences for operating outside the established guidelines or hierarchy. Leaders want to encourage freedom to act, but not when it is outside the proper rules and guidelines of the team or organization.

Taking initiative, assuming personal responsibility means that the direct report has studied the problem or situation in sufficient detail that all that remains is the approval or disapproval of the leader. This does not mean that the direct report comes to the leader with some "idea" on how the solve the problem – *they have spent enough time working through the details to know the solution in its entirety and know it has a great chance of success*.

Taking initiative means the direct report is advising the leader on ***what is to be done***, not asking what to do. That means the direct report will need to study, write, restudy, and rewrite until a single, optimum solution is determined.

The more difficult the problem, the greater the tendency for a direct report to approach the leader with an "idea" or a piecemeal solution. Taking initiative, part of increasing self-governance, means the direct report takes time to work out the details. Leaders can help, but it's best if the direct report works through the situation on their own to build their capacity. Leaders encourage direct reports to find solutions on their own, consult with co-workers and others before enlisting their help. Be reluctant to help and, let them know why – you want them to build their capacity.

The product, when in its finished form, can be presented to the leader for approval or disapproval. It is clear, brief and simple. No long explanations and memos, only presentations and work that the leader can forward to others as his team's recommendation. In most instances, this is a single document prepared for the signature of the boss without needing any accompanying comment.

A subordinate can test if they have provided a complete plan by asking themselves:

1. If I were the boss would I be willing to approve this suggestion, and stake my professional reputation on it being good for the organization?
2. If the answer is no, more work is needed, because it is not yet complete.