**Monday Memo**

**August 10, 2015**

### When Executives Won't Face Facts

It's a common scenario. I was planning a workshop for a group of executives and talking to the executive in charge to make sure that I understood their issues. Previously, the problems had been described as a lack of skills in giving and receiving feedback, concerns about motivating their managers, and conflict resolution. After further discussions, however, I realized that the real rascal was the CEO who was successful but brutal; the “executive retreat” was simply a ruse to try to convince him to change. He spoke to people in an abusive way, committed the cardinal management sin of criticizing in public, and never praised.

Sometimes these group awareness and skill building sessions do work, especially if there are individual assessments before the group starts. And it’s certainly helpful for me to have this background. I will try to give the problem person a nudge during the workshop. An outside facilitator can take risks in that kind of setting that an insider usually can’t do. We typically work on developing group norms and values which we also find to be effective.

Yet frequently, the person who created the problem remains well…a problem. One-on-one coaching is generally required. Ideally, consequences from his or her boss works wonders. If it’s the CEO, however, we have a problem. Then, the only solution is one of those tough conversations that most employees do not want to have.

For more tips on how to have those challenging discussions, see my book *Tough Conversations With Your Boss -- From Promotions to Resignations -- Tackle Any Topic With Sensitivity and Smarts* or longer articles on my website at [www.workplacesthatwork.com](http://www.workplacesthatwork.com).

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Lynne Eisaguirre  
Workplaces That Work  
3985 Wonderland Hill Avenue, Suite 106  
Boulder, Colorado 80304  
303-216-1020  
lynne@workplacesthatwork.com  
www.workplacesthatwork.com

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