Behaviors that Fuel Innovation #3: Escalate for Rapid Conflict Resolution

by Michael Glessner

The previous post in this series reviewed making requests as a means to winning commitments. Making effective, direct requests is a fundamental behavior to enable the execution of successful innovation.

However, in the heat of any complex project, there are bound to be situations where two parties cannot resolve a request into a commitment that will work for everyone. Letting such a situation fester is the worst thing a manager can do. The best action is to quickly resolve the issue.

This is the situation when management escalation makes the most sense. You and I cannot resolve what work you need to finish by the end of this week to keep our project on schedule regarding a key deliverable. I initiated the conversation with a request to you, but after a conversation, you and I are at an impasse.

At this point we immediately reach out to my supervisor and your supervisor to resolve where the organizational priorities lie. It is key to speak to both and to keep the conversation all about the work. We both want to do a good job with all our commitments, and we just need help sorting out priorities. These are usually very quick conversations once the situation is framed for the managers. This is the typical path forward.

Within a specific project, such a conversation should target the project leader or functional leader material to the decision at hand. The key is to immediately involve the right leaders who can determine where the organizational priorities lie, so that the impasse can be resolved as quickly as possible.

An alternative situation that can result in an impasse, is when you (the person I approach with a request) say you cannot commit because there is other work from someone else (say Mr. Jones) that must be done before you can complete the work I am requesting. In this situation, a formal commitment must be won from Mr. Jones before I can complete my conversation with you. Typically, I would coach you to make that request of Mr. Jones, because you are in the best position to negotiate what is needed from him, by when, for you to be successful based on my request. Such a situation may require a conversation between project leaders of both efforts (the escalation) to resolve.

In either case, rapidly addressing these situations and then building the result into the project plan is the most productive approach.

More Reading

Four Behaviors that Fuel Innovation

Behaviors that Fuel Innovation #1: Make Commitments - The Corner Stone of Results
Behaviors that Fuel Innovation #2: Make Requests - The Direct Path to Commitments
Behaviors that Fuel Innovation #3: Escalate for Rapid Conflict Resolution
Behaviors that Fuel Innovation #4: Make Offers to Take the Game to a Whole New Level

Kalypso’s Innovation Results Transformation methodology relies on such behaviors along with the structured approach to bring about innovation results over extended periods of practice. Click here to learn more.

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