Blindsided at Work: One Strike and Your Out

Panelist:
Elaina Norlin (ASERL)

Host:
ASERL DEI Taskforce
Using the Webinar System

• Audio for all participants is automatically muted. You may speak freely with colleagues.

• You can ask a question in two ways:
  – Enter text in “Questions” box
  – Raise your hand; moderator will temporarily un-mute your audio connection.
Future Webinars

- Using immersion, interaction, and virtual reality (VR) to support teaching, learning, and research in mental health (December 7, 2021)

- Enhancing the User Experience and Resource Access using Lean Library (December 14, 2021)

- An Afternoon with the Claytee White - Director, Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries (January 25, 2022)

More Info/Register at www.aserl.org
Recording and Slides at www.aserl.org/archive
Suggestions, Recommendations and Ideas to enorlin@aserl.org
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• Reports are confidential
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• ASERL may also notify the accused person’s employer of the reported incident
Blindsided at Work

Elaina Norlin
ASERL
Case Study 1

• Children’s Librarian (different temperament, style and approach)
• Commonly “disobeyed” rules with positive results (higher programming numbers, customer satisfaction)
• Conflict avoidance –nonverbal cues??
• Performance log on “infractions”
• Performance evaluation –did not meet expectations
• Result: Librarian voluntary left the organization and sued for racial discrimination
What Went Wrong?/Observations/Thoughts
Case Study 2

- Employee wrote an email to the library director about a new grant project
- Director took the email the wrong way
- Leadership team agreed with the director
- Employee brought into the office and delivered punishment (removed from grant project)
- Discovered real intentions of the email
- Kept the punishment (as a reminder)

**Result:** Employee filed a grievance and was reinstated as the grant manager
What Went Wrong?/Observations/Thoughts
Case Study 3

• New reference and instruction librarian (campus)
• Campus librarian visits the library once a month
• Another librarian notice new librarian (disappears)
• Campus librarian/peer librarian collaboration
• New librarian fired before probation
• New librarian filed grievance
• Result: New librarian reinstated and relocated, and campus librarian was fired
Blindsided at Work

- Disengagement
- Low Morale
- Erosion of Trust
- Communication Breakdown
- Organizational Trauma
Blindsided at Work

- Need to Be Right
- Conflict Avoidant (Emotionally Comfortable)
- Culture and Assimilation
- Personality Tension (Flexibility)
- Penalty Culture (Guilty Until Proven Innocent)
- Policies over People (Loss of Humanity)

- Checking Assumptions!
Working Through Conflict

• Checking Assumptions (direct communication)
• Doing Nothing
• Punishment and Penalty
• Mistakes and violations -- Reinforcement

• Question to always ask: What is the end goal and what ultimately needs to be accomplished?
At our organization, when there is a conflict at work, we tend to

A. Direct Communication (Win/Win Situation)
B. Refer to written and unwritten policies
C. Conflict avoidance --we act like it’s not there and make a note without confrontation
D. Mistakes are met with some level of punishment
E. Have radically different rules depending on the department
F. More than one
When you hire a new person, my expectation is that they want to have pride and recognition for their work and effort. My goal as the leader is to find multiple ways to let them know I appreciate them. If there is conflict, it’s just an opportunity for growth and understanding. As we begin to really know each other beyond the job description, conflict decreases dramatically. As long as you pick your staff first, everyone wins.
Managing Through Conflict

Check assumptions always

Avoid the statement …well if it was me…

What is the ultimate goal? What is the outcome?

Talk through mutual solutions

People over policy

Positive reinforcement moving forward

Punishment/penalty sparingly
Managing Conflict: Final Study

• Major Project -- Employee Missed Crucial Deadline
• Crucial Deadline??
• Employee: Usually turns in projects on time (policy: written memo)
• What is the expectation beyond the deadline
• Met Employee in their office – questions
• Negotiated new timeline and outcomes
• Reinforced positive behavior
• Employee turned in the final project outcomes before due date and felt appreciated for the positive effort
What Went Right?
The Six-Step Guide to Library Worker Engagement | ALA Store

American Library Association
Discount Code: SSGW21

QUESTIONS??
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