You Can Lead a Horse to Water
Strategies to Keep Moving Forward When Others Don’t Follow the Rules

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OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio’s public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service, unwavering advocacy and creative solutions.

You can lead a horse to water...

Hint: This is Cheryl’s session disclaimer!
ONE of these groups is enjoying the ride…

Rule Breakers Among Us

The Micro-Manager & The Bully
The Micro Manager

Five Ingredients
1. Power Position
2. Self-Doubt
3. Inability to Trust
4. Perfectionistic Tendency
5. Unrealistic Expectations

The “Innocent” Micro Manager

1. Unaware of the role
2. Detail person
3. Highly organized
4. Thinks in “bites”
5. Highly invested
The Micro Manager

• Over-scrutinizes
  – Requires much more time (or more data) than many to weigh information or come to decision
  – Asks many more questions than seems reasonable or appropriate

• Demands excessive oversight
  – Wants or needs more status updates or progress meetings than should be necessary
  – Disrupts the chain of command to assure self that works is moving forward appropriately
The Micro Manager

- Isn’t as concerned with the “what” as the “how”
  - Spends majority of time concerned with action steps and process instead of end result
  - Confuses role as governor with that of manager

The Bully

Four Main Types
1. Shock and Awe!
2. Passive Aggressive
3. Gate-Keeper
4. Constant Critic
2. Passive Aggressive
   – Rumor Spreader but “never the source”
   – Two-faced tiger who wants to be everyone’s confidant/friend
   – Seeks to control or manipulate others’ reputations
   – Unwilling to state intentions clearly

1. Shock and Awe!
   – Surprise Attacks
   – Scream tactics
   – Always in public
   – Key strategy of Shock and Awe bullies is to paralyze, unnerve and freeze others from responding.
3. Gate Keeper
   - Wants to be the only one with all of the details
   - Enjoys ability to see work grind to a halt
   - Wants to control deadlines
   - Withholds information until last possible moment

4. Constant Critic
   - Prefers discussions behind closed doors
   - Becomes your word against theirs
   - Often targets the previously most liked or most trusted
   - Key strategy of Constant Critic is to redefine competent people as incompetent
What makes a Rule Breaker?

- Is this person new to the board or the district?
  - Less trust
  - More oversight
  - Wants to make immediate impact
  - Looking for his or her place

What makes a Rule Breaker?

- Is this person psychologically programmed to control?
  - Childhood/background
  - Other aspects of life out of control
  - Low self-esteem
  - Is him/herself controlled by others
What makes a Rule Breaker?

- Innocent Ignorance
  - Doesn’t know they’re behaving or acting inappropriately
  - Doesn’t understand his or her appropriate role
  - Unfamiliar with the governance role (the ‘what not the how’)

Keep in Mind…

Micro managers, bullies and difficult people tend to have a central “go to” personality or style, but may jump across types when the need arises.
Keep in Mind…

Even harder…a Rule Breaker can be a micro manager and a bully and a difficult person!

Use Positive Strategies and…

1. Adjust! You most likely cannot “fix” the person.
Five Positive Strategies for Moving Forward When the Rule Breakers are Making it Tough

Strategy #1

Be assertive, not aggressive

– Use very clear communication.
– Don’t say more than you need to make your point. “I’m not prepared right now to support that idea.”
– State the fact and then your feelings. “When you don’t fully prepare for our meetings, I feel disrespected.”
## Strategy #2

**Make up-front agreements**
- Consider a process agreement/review
- Agree on gate-checks, status updates to ensure accountability of all
- Don’t allow for back-sliding. “We all agreed on our goal and the process.”
- “What specifically is happening that is making you question this decision?”

## Strategy #3

- **Make it about their success**
  - “We know you want to make a great decision. What can I/we do to build your trust in the staff’s ability to do the work?”
  - “Your collaboration will make our discussion better. What information do you need to participate in the work?”
  - “At this point there’s no right or wrong answer. We’re exploring all alternatives.”
Strategy #4

Recognize It’s Not About You

- Address inappropriate behavior in a neutral place whenever possible. “Let’s take some time to think about what’s happened and come back to it tomorrow.”
- “Your reaction has taken me by surprise. I need some time to think about my response.”
- Build the relationship and the trust in order to make honest feedback easier.

- Understand that fighting makes it worse, and in fact may be what the rule breaker is looking for.
- “I sense your frustration. What can we provide to make it less stressful to have this conversation?”
- “You disagree with this idea. Tell us more about why.”
Strategy #5

• Keep the focus where it should be: On Governance -- the “what”, not the “how”
  – An exception might be when newbies are in training or orientation mode
  – Use your district’s goals, vision or strategic plan as a measuring stick for the “what”.
  – Look for middle ground. “We don’t all agree on this idea. Let’s build on the points where we all do agree.”
  – “Let’s remember what our end-goal is. We have staff in place to get us there.”
Bonus Thoughts!

• Be very clear in board meeting conversations.
• Use board meetings to educate your community.
• Put the basic BOE responsibilities on your web page.
• Respect and use the Chain of Command.

Remember my disclaimer?

• It’s not our job to fix the rule breakers, but to find the ‘work arounds’.
• Attempt to understand why they’re doing what they’re doing.
• Be consistent in addressing the issue, not the personality.
Work hard to believe that even the worst Rule Breaker can sometimes have a good perspective or great idea.

Thanks for being with me today!

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