

Managing 'Key Moments' Leads to Success in the Workplace

Behavior can tell you a lot about a person. It can explain someone's actions at any given moment, while simultaneously creating a roadmap to overcome life's daily hurdles to achieve success. For those in the credit industry, emotional intelligence (EI) must not only be understood, but also developed and practiced in order to navigate the tense times and reach a brighter tomorrow.

As part of NACM's Leadership Webinar Series, Senior Advisor and Business Consultant Robert Grossman, of Syntesis Global, LLC, explored EI from an executive's perspective, defining it as a person's awareness that his or her emotions drive behavior and, therefore, positively or negatively impact others. Low EI creates a lack of trust between an employer and employee, which may lead to dissipating motivation, minimal satisfaction or even a fear of sharing ideas. So, rather than letting emotions run wild, all parties must learn to control their EI, in turn, improving relationships and enhancing the teamwork culture. Grossman said Millennials are very "honed in" on EI and respond negatively when it's lacking in their work environment.

Adhering to EI begins when someone encounters a stressful situation that establishes pressure. Grossman used a personal example, detailing his interaction with a maître d' while attending an event that was produced by his former tech company. Two hours before the event began, Grossman said, he was approached by a man who told him that Grossman's tech riser "didn't look good."

"At that moment, I don't know why, but I started seeing red and got totally triggered," said Grossman, who identified this fuming feeling as a "key moment." His frustration and anger arose as part of the brain's limbic system (the fight-or-flight response), but Grossman said he harnessed his EI to move those feelings to the rational part of the brain.

Key moments can go one of two ways: the pathway of survival, where the individual lacks vision and purpose, reacts from fear, resists reality and disowns responsibility; or the pathway of self-mastery, where the individual has a clear vision and purpose, acts with integrity, embraces reality and exercises responsibility—the former will only set up more key moments. In that scenario, Grossman said he began the confrontation with a fearful yet angry reaction because of the man's negative comments. Then, Grossman shifted to a moment of integrity and responsibility by fixing the riser and kindly asking the same man if he would take another look. How did he do that?

"The first step in moving and improving our EI is the state of being mentally aware of how our actions, speech, body language and response to other people's emotions impacts [them]," he said, referring to a response chain that starts with key moments and ends at one of the aforementioned pathways. In between, people experience paradigms (how you look at the key moment, i.e., questioning fear, duty, achievement and integrity), meaning (what the key moment means), feelings (how you feel about the key moment) and behavior (how you react).

Overcoming these key moments requires pushing through your intent to protect yourself and, instead, growing to handle the situation differently. Grossman said it's "hitting the pause button" that allows someone to analyze the situation and decide how he or she wants it to end. In other words, you must be aware, have a desire to change, commit to your feelings and practice, practice, practice. Take a deep breath or a quick walk, change your posture, talk to a friend or colleague, or listen to music before moving forward with a decision. By doing so before reengaging with the maître d', Grossman said he achieved the pathway to success, which led him to more promising projects.

“That would not have been predictable if I had gone down the path of seeing red,” he said.

The 2018 Leadership Webinar Series will continue on Thursday, April 26 at 10 a.m. (ET) with Principal Rick Hernandez, of Syntesis Global, LLC, during his presentation of the Effective Communications Model: Clarity, Audience, Purpose, Time, Understanding, Respect and Empowerment, also known as C.A.P.T.U.R.E. Contact NACM or FCIB to register for a three-pack of leadership influence webinars.

—Andrew Michaels, editorial associate