



Using Effective Leadership Strategies in the Workplace

Some Lessons from Life in the 1500's

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The next time you're working on a big project at work, you can use the following facts from life in the 1500's to keep your boss off your back, and keep yourself on track:

- When he doesn't like your idea: In the 1500's, baths equaled a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water". Tell your boss that you know your idea will work if he'll just give it a chance.
- When things aren't going smoothly and the sky seems to be falling in on you: Houses in the 1500's had thatched roofs. There was only thick straw, piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the pets... dogs, cats and other small animals, mice, rats, bugs lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, "It's raining cats and dogs". Keep going - at least real animals aren't falling on your head.
- When you feel like your idea is just about to pay off: In the 1500's, many houses had slate floors which would get slippery in the winter when wet. So people spread thresh on the floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on they kept adding more thresh until when you opened the door it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed at the entry way, hence a "thresh hold". Sometimes people could obtain pork and would feel really special when that happened. When company came over, they would bring out some bacon and hang it to show it off. It was a sign of wealth and that a man "could really bring home the bacon." Tell your boss that you're on the thresh hold of bringing home the bacon, and that he should leave you alone.

And finally, if your boss has bad breath and you don't know how to tell him, you could share this useful information: In the 1500's people with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food. This happened most often with tomatoes, so they stopped eating tomatoes... for 400 years. Most people didn't have pewter plates, but had trenchers - a piece of wood with the middle scooped out like a bowl. Trenchers were never washed and a lot of times worms got into the wood. After eating off wormy trenchers, they would get "trench mouth." Maybe he'll get the hint - but don't count on it!

Who says you can't learn from history?

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