

- Everyone, just about, gets defensive when they have goofed. If a goof takes place, harping on it can only make someone extra-defensive and therefore resentful and even counter-aggressive. It never "teaches a lesson"! It only evokes anger.
- Emphasizing what went wrong and how wrong it was in a judgmental way derails *constructive* outcomes such as fixing the problem and ensuring that it doesn't happen again.

Therefore my recommendation is: Follow a no-fault policy. The guilty party *is* guilty and generally feels pretty bad about it. Be clear about what went wrong, but let him/her off the defensive hot-seat by analyzing the issue objectively and solving the mistakes impersonally. This saves the apologizing and/or excuses time and eliminates the need to counterattack.

Number 4 on the list, "I'll give him another chance," tells the Exec that he really *wants* Mike to succeed. That he's *not* ready to make this a last-ditch stand. That his underlying motive is to give Mike another chance.

If that's true, then give him the best chance you can. Give Mike new information and tools to climb out of the morass he seems to be stuck in! Help him out! He obviously can't fix it alone or he would have.

Theirs

Imagining yourself as Mike, in such a situation, can make you stop your plan simply to be "firm" and "irritated." Becoming aware and predicting, as you explore your expectations, that he'll probably be defensive or promise you anything just to be done with the meeting, makes you start thinking of a more productive strategy with a more lasting outcome.

An even more important reason to move to the other side of the chart and find out-what Mike expects is the element of *surprise*.

The quickest way to get anyone's attention is to do the unexpected—whether it's a pie in the face (not often recommended in the office) or simply behaving very differently from what someone anticipated.

Knowing what Mike *thinks* will happen, what he *expects* you're going to do and say, gives you the opportunity to come in from another direction entirely. This has the double benefit of not only making Mike give total attention to the new set of circumstances, with no previously conditioned response at the ready, but also making him come up with a much more genuine and unguarded reaction to what you say and do. To