



Focus

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Home

Mission

Services

Testimonials

Clients

About

Removing Barriers

My offer of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich sealed the deal when I asked a corporate accounting manager to attend a mid-day church planning meeting during the middle of his month-end close. As he put it, PB&J is one of the seven basic food groups. Who knew?

My friend probably would have attended anyway, but the lunch offer saved him time. I did not lead with the PB&J enticement, although I was planning to bring lunch for all meeting attendees. Rather, I made the lunch offer when he mentioned eating a sandwich on the way. My point is that I quickly identified a barrier and solved a problem.

Good leaders routinely remove barriers that hinder followers. Barriers often involve procedures, rules, schedule flexibility and – yes – even meals, either for the individual or his or her family. The important thing is to be constantly on the lookout for a barrier that you can easily remove. A leader's mindset, not the budget, is the major obstacle here.

I've written before about the power of "stop doing" lists. You can use that same logic to search for barriers in your organization. Most de facto barriers are not explicitly designed to hinder performance, but rather accumulate over time. Bureaucracy can be insidious!

As for me, I'm getting hungry as I write this. Maybe Mrs. Wagner will make me a PB&J sandwich.

Tom Wagner

Think about all the good things that happen
when people share a meal together

when people share a meal together.

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