



Dear Joe:

One of my employees is very reserved and doesn't socialize with anyone. Most of the time, she just stays at her desk. She's also this way during meetings. She never presents an idea or gives an opinion on input from others. I'm not sure how to get her to participate in work activities or how to make her feel included. I'm not even sure how to approach her. Can you help me?

Sincerely, Reserved Employee

Dear Reserved Employee,

It can be a struggle to have people on the team who don't seem willing to participate. While that can be frustrating, here are two questions to consider:

- Do these two concerns impact this team member's ability to achieve her goals?
- Do either of these behaviors violate the Values of your credit union?

Since it doesn't appear that the answer to either of these questions is yes based on the problem you're having, let me ask you another question:

- Can you accept these behaviors as part of who this team member is?

Leaders can spend tremendous amounts of energy trying to perfect people, molding them into a "better" version of someone they are not. The reality of any team is that it is comprised of imperfect people, each one having their own natural preferences and little idiosyncrasies. With that in mind, instead of trying to make this team member more social, accept her for who she is and try to notice what she does well. Perhaps by staying at her desk she gets a lot of work done. Maybe she has great powers of concentration and endurance. In meetings, she might not be able to come up with ideas because she needs to process information and mull her thoughts over before speaking. When she is afforded time, she might come up with brilliant ideas. Search for the good stuff that's already there, not what's missing. As a leader, your job is to make people better. That means looking for different ways to connect with each person. Maybe by providing an agenda in advance or circling back with her after the meeting, you can build the platform that will bring out her best thinking.

A profitable practice is to approach her and everyone on your team with positive intent. Really get to know each member of your team and realize that they will have their own unique talents and strengths. Engaging in conversations focused on the gifts people have to offer creates a different dialogue that can advance your team and your credit union to greater levels of unity, commitment and performance.

Stay Positive – Joe B.