



More Chocolate Sauce in the Workplace



When working with an administrator who just promoted an assistant that needed specific direction on how to approach staff in his new position, his boss told him that he needed “More Chocolate Sauce.”

More Chocolate Sauce Defined

After we had a good laugh at that phrase I had him break down what the boss meant. Sweeten your approach as far as word usage, tone, and intensity; avoid rudeness, language and the need to be always right! In addition, it can go beyond word usage to body language, facial expressions, and attitude. It also implies to not be so direct, bottom line, and insulting when speaking with others, which by far, is more attractive and professional anyway.

If you are reading this and bristle at the thought of weighing your words and approach to others, then you are THE classic candidate for “more chocolate sauce.”

The Chocolate Sauce Self-Analysis

Here are some of the common characteristics of an employee/manager that need more sweetening to a bitter approach:

- If you been told through your life that “it’s not what you say but how you say it.”
- If the thought of changing your approach for anyone frustrates you because “that’s just the way you are.”
- If you have all the experience or qualifications for a promotion, but your way with co-workers is the only thing standing in the way.
- If you find that others go over your head for answers or pull back from telling you how they really feel.

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- If others make requests to not work with you, or transfer to a different department.
- When those closest to you start complaining about your need to change in that area.

If you answered yes to any one of these, you might consider recalibrating your approach with others at work or in the home.

I've worked with others whose supervisors asked me to coach them in their blunt demeanor and the individuals frequently says something like "Yeah, my boss wants

me to talk to you about adding more fluff to my conversations. I don't understand why people have to be so needy."

To which I reply, "I think you are missing the point. You are not just complying with your boss's request or being more sensitive to needy people. This is about being a professional and the need to treat others with more courtesy and tact. It is about being more effective in the workplace and building a more awesome team, and in some cases keeping your job."

A Portrait of a Direct Person

1. Generally, they are very honest about the information or unsolicited opinions they offer; so they feel 'why beat around the bush.'
2. More times than not they are right in their assessments, but the approach can be so forceful and arrogant that people do not care if they are right.
3. Frequently they are the most competent employees in their position, at least when it comes to experience, organization, and efficiency.
4. They seem to have a blind spot and cannot understand why they have very few friends.
5. Co-workers start pulling away from them because they don't seem "to have a filter" and they are exhausting to work with.

How to Work With Those Needing More Chocolate Sauce

- Be as honest with them as possible. I had to resolve a matter with a long-time friend over his insulting approach with me and my default tendency is to always avoid conflict. As I thought about what to do, I considered my options. Option one was to avoid him altogether and pull away with no explanation. Option two was go to him directly and simply explain how he spoke to me inappropriately.

I did just that, and he quickly owned his behavior and then thanked me. He said, "If you had not come to me directly how would I have ever known what to change. Your friendship is way too important to me." Most direct people expect you to do the same in a respectful way.



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- Let them know they are valued, but limiting their own progress. If they know you have their back in terms of input and ideas they will be more apt to listen carefully. But, be sure to tell them their approach is having a negative impact on the team and/or customers.
- Read between the lines. Some personality types have more of a tendency to be direct and to the point. It's not meant to be personal, just factual. Below is a good example of what I'm referring to.

A CEO of a bank once said to his team “At work I am like a train on a track. My only goal is my next destination. If you need to speak to me while I’m on my track you will lose me in seconds. Do not take it personal. It has nothing to do with you. It’s how I process information. If we need to sit down and talk, I will enter your world and hear everything you have to say, but I have to get off my track first.”

A Word For the One Needing More Chocolate Sauce

In most cases it is possible that you are an effective, highly-skilled person in your position. You probably don't have a lazy bone in your body and are better known as a workhorse. You take great pride in your accomplishments and have years of experience and/or credentials. You take your position seriously and have very high standards for yourself and others. The organization has kept you as a competent employee, and in some cases, you have climbed the ladder of success within your company.

There is only one area that is taking away from your competency and work ethic. It is how you have treated those you work with. Although you might feel a sense of appreciation for those on the team, they frequently can't sense that. Your abrupt or opinionated approach must change. In the long run, the people you work with are more valuable than the product or work you achieve.

It's never too late to add more chocolate sauce to your professional ambiance. It's worth the investment and those that you live or work with will respect and enjoy being around you like never before!



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Conclusion

I was working with a couple 25 years ago who came to me because the wife was burning out on her husband's intensity. He had a few successful businesses and had built his revenue at a rapid pace. I asked her to give us an example of his intimidating approach and she said it's the way he talks to his secretaries and assistants at work. He said he understood.

As we talked more I said to him "I understand that you have been working long hours and have built your success from the ground up, but I don't understand why a bright guy like you would sabotage your own success." He replied, "What do you mean?" I said, "The way you speak to, and approach, those who you work with." He quickly said, "You are right. I need to change my approach!" Smart boss! He just needed more chocolate sauce and his company is still doing well 25 years later.

For training or information on the above subject go to teamworks-works.com and click on the workshop link: **Track #1- Understanding Personality Differences and Communication in the Workplace**, **Track #6- Attitude is Everything in the Workplace**, or **Track #21- Customer Service A Win-Win in the Workplace**

For a further "short but sweet" reading on a professional verbal approach at work click on the Newsletter link for **Difficult Conversations in the Workplace**.



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Bill formed TeamWorks in 2001 to help organizations achieve their goals for establishing high morale and client satisfaction. TeamWorks currently specializes in offering one-on-one surveys and evaluations for management and staff to assess the current culture's needs and recommended trainings going forward.

In addition to conducting a variety of workshops and in-services on workplace issues, Bill mediates conflict among partnerships and staff relationships, speaks at conventions, facilitates management retreats, and offers personal consultation and counseling for staff.

Bill's strengths are in public speaking, mediation, and understanding the complexities of relational dynamics in the workplace. He lives in Medford, Oregon, with his wife Jenny, and enjoys spending time with their five children and five granddaughters.