



by Brad Worthley

## How Choice Can Empower Team Members and Guests

*“Choice is personal power and the ultimate expression of free will. It allows you to participate in your own destiny. There is nothing more empowering than personal responsibility, which comes from having choice.”*

Has a team member ever complained to you that they “had to come to work today?” Anytime a person feels they have no choice, that is called a “trapped perspective” which creates a lot of anxiety if not addressed. It is important for a team leader to restore choice, so team members feel like they are more in control of their own destiny, such as letting team members know that coming to work is actually a choice. If they choose to come to work, then they may create more opportunity in the future for career advancement and greater opportunity for a good life. If they choose not to go to work, they need to realize there may be consequences to their choice, which may result in losing their job and not being able to support themselves or their families.

An employee’s statement about “having to come to work” allows them to feel robbed of choice, like they had no alternative (this is a victim mentality), which can dramatically impact their attitude, morale and productivity. Their infectious nature may spread, because victims like to feel heard, so they will tell others about how they feel, which is why it is important to address the issue with them.

We all make choices from the time we get up until the time we go to bed, such as: Should I set my alarm before I go to bed? Should I brush my teeth in the morning? Should I go to work or call in sick today? Should I do what my manager asked me or tell them no?

Most of the time when dealing with choice, you are weighing the rewards (pleasure) verses consequences (pain) of your choice. For most, the choice can be pretty clear based on those two options. However, when you feel you are being robbed of choice, and you perceive there is no decision available to you, it can create emotional challenges.

A leader’s role is to listen for disempowering language or victim statements from team members and address them quickly before they spread. In the scenario above where a team member tells you they feel they “have to” come to work, simply ask them if they have a few minutes to discuss the issue (once again, you are giving them choice by asking permission to discuss their issue). If they say “yes” then ask them why they feel that way. If you are still hearing their trapped perspective,

then ask them what choices are available to them. Help them recognize and restore choice, so they can make the right decision for themselves.

If a guest is told by a team member that they “have to” or “must” fill a form out before they get their money, that is going to create anxiety in your guest because they may feel dictated to. The words “have to” or “must” have robbed them of choice and personal power, which can lead to frustration or anger in the guest. To avoid this scenario, just think carefully about the words you use with guests and make sure you are not robbing them of choice. If someone needs to fill a form out, simply say “I would appreciate it if you could fill this form out for us.” You and the guest both know it needs to be filled out, so that is not in question – it is how you deliver the message that counts.

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*Choice = Possibility = Opportunity = Success*

Whether it is with team members or guests, think carefully about the words you use and make sure those words are not dictating to them. If someone feels like they are being told what to do, they may resent you for that. Resentment can turn into retaliation, which means they may look for a way to punish you back. With team members, that could translate into push back, poor morale, poor service, high call-ins, high turnover, low productivity and low profitability. With guests, retaliation might be not coming back to your casino or damaging your brand on social media.

In summary, think before you speak and make sure you do not rob people of choice. As the great poet, Maya Angelou, once said, “People may forget what you said, or what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” ♣

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