

Summer Artifact

Public Persuasion, Private Writing Assignment – Week 1

In week one of my Public Persuasion class, we learned about a technique called critical thinking through private writing. After choosing a prompt, you must write fast and furious. This exercise was three minutes long. The idea is to write whatever comes to mind without correcting the text. Just fast writing about whatever the prompt was. After completion, you should be able to go back and read it and get to the bottom of the issue that is bothering you. The reflection paper was a summary of my experience with learning the technique.

Karen Osher – Private Writing Assignment

When I began writing, I started to think about something that bothered me about my job. I began thinking about why this subject got under my skin. The issue was the lack of understanding about employee engagement - specifically, employee engagement around retention. My company spends so much time recruiting but lacks the attention needed for employee retention.

As I banged away on my keyboard using the writing process in the workshop lecture, I noticed a pattern of frustrations within myself. I realized the more I talked about retention, the more I tried to get at how to fix it. I started to go off the rails a bit and talked about inflation, wages, my grocery bill, and my gas tank. I spoke about never wanting to return to an office again and how I love my remote-work lifestyle. I realized none of this had anything to do with keeping current employees happy, but I went on for a good paragraph about it! Part of me felt like a raving lunatic, complaining about things that had nothing to do with employee retention. Perhaps this was me trying to figure out my happiness and where I fit into the employee retention equation. I mean, I am an employee. Even though I work with all the other employees on engagement, my happiness matters too!

After I wrapped up my paragraph, I reviewed what stuck out to me. What was I really getting at? What was I really trying to say? What mattered in the big picture? What was my takeaway from this exercise? The one sentence that stuck out was this. "How can we engage the workforce to be happy again?". This was what it was all about. People being happy and making employees happy. Glad to be at work, happy to work for a company that cares about making and KEEPING them happy. This thought was my action item. What actions can I propose to the Leadership team to help our current employees feel valued? How can I switch the conversation from constantly focusing on recruiting to concentrating on retention? We already know happy employees are more engaged. In other words, what can I do to help facilitate those conversations with our Leadership team to show them how to help make employees happy?

I found the writing technique most helpful when I was writing fast and furious. It helped to make the font color white, so I couldn't see what I was typing. This suggestion helped me because I couldn't see what I was typing, which forced me not to go back and make corrections. It also helped to clear my mind of distractions. I discovered my writing was chaotic yet made sense. There were one or two sentences that were my 'AH-HA' moments. This is the critical part and what the exercise is all about. It was like a truth-serum moment. The fast and furious writing made me say what I wanted to say. In the end, cutting away all the fluff and getting to the heart of the issue was where I was most successful.