

MEDIATE THIS !

THE TALE OF THE MULTITASKING ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

Dear Mediator:

I'm working in my first job after graduating college. My boss is a great mentor, and I want to please her, so I don't mind when she gives me personal tasks to do, like picking up lunch or running store errands. But she just told me she needs me to cat-sit at her house while she's on a two-week summer vacation. That seems out of line. Plus, I'm allergic to cats! Should I just get a doctor's note?

Perplexed in National City

Dear Perplexed:

A doctor's note might extricate you from this predicament. Then again, it might not. Your boss could just hand you a bottle of allergy medication. Or tell you to pick some up at a pharmacy.

Short-term fixes don't resolve conflicts; they postpone them. Your boss is treating a professional colleague like a personal servant. This has landed you in a common employment quandary: how to establish appropriate boundaries with a clueless supervisor and still remain on good terms.

You need to reboot this important working relationship. Luckily, there's a strategy for that.

Workplace conflict resolution

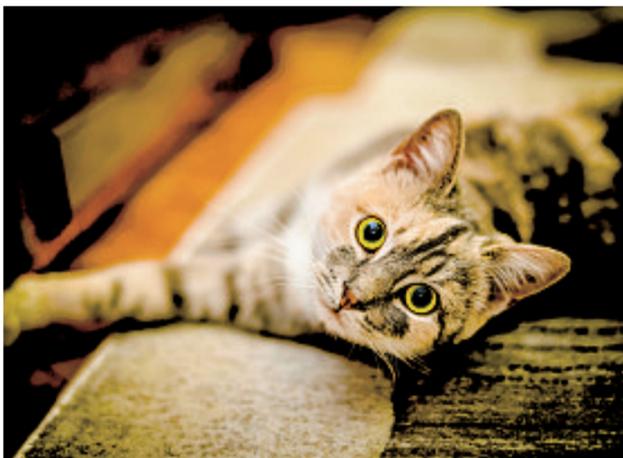
training has traditionally emphasized communication skills to defuse tense job situations. In the wake of the #MeToo movement, new curricula are focusing on the plight of subordinates whose bosses, unwittingly or not, abuse their power.

At the National Conflict Resolution Center, we've developed a "toolkit" employees can use to intervene respectfully when they see a supervisor harassing or bullying a co-worker. It offers strategies you could apply to shore up your own position.

When an improper demand requires a sudden reply, an improvised distraction can offer a quick exit ramp. For example, if your boss insists you accompany her to the dentist in the late afternoon, instead of saying "Yes" or "No," ask her for a few minutes to check your calendar, which will buy you time to formulate a suitable response.

Another option for a junior colleague under stress is to seek private advice from a senior colleague, someone who has a management rank or has earned respect through long years of service.

This should be someone you can trust. If you frame your problem constructively — you are happy to support a valued boss, but you don't want to compromise



GETTY IMAGES

This week's question comes from a reader whose boss has made personal cat-sitting part of the office workload.

your job performance and professional growth — you may acquire a new mentor who can guide you through this thicket.

Taking a longer view, if you think you might be leadership material, this would be a good time to learn creative problem-solving techniques.

Compile a roster of merchants with delivery service. The next time your boss wants to send you

on an errand, share the good news that you can stay at your post by getting someone else to fetch her coffee.

If her sense of entitlement persists, it may mean she secretly enjoys what she's doing. Power can be an intoxicant that drives otherwise good people into treating subordinates badly simply because they can.

That's when we move to a di-

rect approach. Like all conversations in conflict resolution, this one will start by asking questions and listening carefully to the answers. By using neutral language and focusing on shared goals, you can appeal to your boss as the mentor she is.

You want to please her. You need to know if she is satisfied with your job performance. And you could use her feedback about ways to improve that performance.

From there, tell her you are eager to establish a reputation for professional competence. Running personal errands diminishes your standing in the eyes of your colleagues, and it takes time away from your assigned duties.

Navigating workplace strife often compels us to initiate awkward conversations. The earlier you learn to do that skillfully, the clearer your path to career advancement.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San Diego-based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003. **Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution?** Share your story with The Mediator via email at mediate@ncrconline.com or as an online submission by visiting www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

OUTDOORS: ERNIE COWAN

Backdrop of color in the backcountry

The spring bloom of poppies and the vast fields of desert wildflowers have faded, but San Diego outdoor lovers still have another color show to enjoy as warming temperatures advance the bloom to higher elevations.

There's also a new sound if you happen to be hiking through some of San Diego's wild canyons. It's the sound of running water from joyful creeks babbling with runoff resulting from our very wet winter. It's a sound you don't often hear.

In the next few weeks, one of the best displays of spring wildflower color will be happening along state Route 79 through the Warner Valley, east of Lake Henshaw.

This is an area of mostly private property, so your best viewing will be from the car window as you head for a destination like Julian where fresh apple pie and ice cream can add flavor to your day.

The color is just starting to spread across the wide, green valley, with deep blue and purple patches of baby blue-eyes and wild Canterbury bells, more delicate purple filariae and broad pools of bright yellow goldfields.

The goldfields are slowly spreading across the valley like spilled paint.

The unusual sound of water is another pleasure you might encounter when hiking some of the county's trails.

Near record amounts of rainfall have recharged seasonal streams, adding to the glory of the abundant spring.

Hiking along one of the creeks, I climbed a small hill to get a better look at the beautiful and intricate patch of Canterbury bells. I was surprised at how quiet it was, until I realized I was the reason.

An attentive raven had spotted me and was circling about warning others of a forest intruder. I decided to sit quietly for a while and see what happened.

Shortly the noise of forest industry started again.

First it was the chattering of a ground squirrel, the machine-gun tapping of an acorn woodpecker, a distant gobble of a wild turkey and the whispering of a soft spring breeze through budding trees.

Scrub jays added to the noise with their pugnacious squawks, and a hopeful wren was continuously repeating a courting call.

This was a short trip out, but I returned invigorated. When do we learn that the power of nature might far exceed any medication?

Forbes, Science Daily and just last month



ERNIE COWAN

Goldfields carpeting the ground in Warner Valley east of Lake Henshaw.

Positive Psychology wrote about spending even a few minutes a day in nature can lower blood pressure, increase productivity, promote better sleep and contribute to overall wellness.

So, if you haven't been out to see the wildflowers, or even if you have, there's still a chance to greatly improve your health with a leisurely drive through the backcountry.

Speaking of spending more time outdoors, the San Diego Natural History Museum is sponsoring the City Nature Challenge April 26-29.

This will be the second year of the event, a global challenge to see which region can record the greatest number of observations of local wild plants and animals during the four-day event.

The Nat is coordinating the effort that encourages residents and visitors to document as many species as they can using the iNaturalist app.

Once the census is compiled, the results will be announced on May 6 by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and the California Academy of Sciences.

Participants are encouraged to visit as many habitats as possible to get photos to upload to your account on iNaturalist. The app is free, and you will need to join the 2019 City Nature Challenge: San Diego County.

Last year, San Diego placed in the top three in all categories including number of species observed, number of participants and number of observations.

For additional information, visit sdnhm.org.

Email ernie@packtrain.com or visit erniesoutdoors.blogspot.com.

THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

New web design; S.D. as a border city

Readers probably have noticed a few changes to the Union-Tribune's website, sduniontribune.com. The site's new design made its debut March 26.

The website appears much sharper, and there are other improvements readers will see.

U-T digital editor Ricky Young said the site features more modern layouts and fresher fonts. "The main headline font takes its inspiration from the days of hand-set type — so it has a traditional feel to it," he said.

Also the newsroom can make certain updates that once required an I.T. professional in another state, "so we are able to react more nimbly to news," he said.

In addition, the site has "new storytelling formats to highlight our enterprise journalism, and readers can expect to see those presentations more frequently," Young said. "Our Crime Counts package (March 31), featuring an analysis of crime rates by neighborhood, was a good first foray into the new formats. Day to day, readers will also notice navigation has been improved, pages will load faster, and photos and videos will be presented more boldly."

The readers' rep heard some feedback about changes to commenting on the new site.

Comments now require real names. One reader said he disliked that because he worried about his safety.

The problem with people using Internet handles instead of real names is the nastiness that accompanies anonymity.

"The idea is, people will be less likely to 'spam' or 'flame' each other when they're putting their name behind their comments," Young said.

Another effect of the real names is, Young said, "people will be automatically signed into comments when signing into our website, so they will have one fewer password to remember."

San Diego vs. El Paso

Which is the bigger "border" city — San Diego or El Paso?

About a week ago the U-T received an email from a native San Diegan who took offense to a story in the British daily newspaper The Guardian. The story, he said, identified El Paso as the largest city on the U.S.-Mexico border. He said he wrote to The Guardian to dispute the statement.

He said this was The Guardian's response: "After serious consideration, we have



JOHN GIBBINS U-T FILE

San Diego city limits align the international border in some areas.

decided not to amend this article. El Paso is a city on the border. There is nothing that separates it from the border and it is seamlessly connected via bridges with Juárez on the other side. San Diego has incorporated other towns, including San Ysidro by the border, but it is not a city seamlessly on the border."

In his email to the U-T, he wrote: "As a native of San Diego, I am horribly offended that the Guardian would not consider San Diego to be a city on the border. I don't know whether or not the Union-Tribune would agree, but I really thought I needed a louder voice to correct them."

The email was forwarded to U-T immigration reporter Kate Morrissey and me.

I saw The Guardian's point of view. Yes, San Ysidro, Otay Mesa and Nestor are parts of the city of San Diego. But as you move away from the border you quickly hit the cities of Imperial Beach, National City and Chula Vista. And many city of San Diego communities (Rancho Peñasquitos, Rancho Bernardo, Del Mar Heights, Scripps Ranch, San Pasqual Valley) stretch far north, nowhere near the border.

Morrissey disagreed. "The fact that San Diego goes so far north just goes to show how big it is, the fact that it's much bigger than El Paso, and should be called the largest border city on the U.S. side."

El Paso is 256 square miles with a population of about 683,000.

San Diego is 372 square miles with a population of about 1.42 million.

San Diego is bigger, but so much of it is not near the border.

OK readers, what do you think — which is the bigger "border city"? Email readers-rep@sduniontribune.com

FROM THE ARCHIVES

LANDMARK BUILDING OPENED DOWNTOWN IN 1928

On April 14, 1928, San Diego Trust & Savings Bank opened a grand new headquarters building at Sixth Avenue and Broadway downtown. Designed by architect William Templeton Johnson in the Italian Romanesque Revival style, the 14-story building, topped with a cupola, was the tallest on Broadway until 1960, when the Home Federal bank building was completed. The San Diego Trust & Savings Bank building was renovated and re-opened in 1999 as a Courtyard by Marriott hotel.

From The San Diego Union, Saturday, April 14, 1928:

SAN DIEGO TRUST & SAVINGS BANK TO OCCUPY NEW HOME TODAY

EVERYONE INVITED TO PREVIEW BUILDING AND BANK. 2 P.M. TO 10 P.M.

SIXTH & BROADWAY BUILDING TO BE CENTER OF ATTRACTION ALL AFTERNOON AND EVENING

Completed on schedule to the dot as planned over a year ago, the San Diego Trust & Savings Bank will hold its formal opening today with the public invited to inspect its new banking home and 14-story office building at Sixth and Broadway, between the hours of 2 and 10 p.m.

Just 39 years ago in April, when San Diego was a village with a few board walks in the business district as its principal municipal improvements, the San Diego Trust & Savings Bank was given its charter to open for business in one side of a small store room rented on Fifth street.

Now, after a consistent growth which has come entirely without merger or amalgamation with other institutions, the San Diego Trust & Savings Bank invites all of San Diego to view its new 14-story building and inspect the facilities and equipment of its various departments occupying the main floor, basement and mezzanine.

The style of architecture is Lombard-Romanesque, which made it possible through the use of pier columns and arches to accent the vertical lines of the building.

Up to the level of the second floor, about 40 feet above the sidewalk, the exterior is Briar



Hall sandstone, a beautiful stone of varied and interesting color, used for the first time on the Pacific coast. Above the second floor the building is faced with terra cotta of a warm buff, blending well with the color of the sandstone.

The richly-decorated cornice is capped with tile of slight projection, thus allowing adequate light for the upper tier of office windows. Above this cornice, the base of the tower contains two offices affording, perhaps, one of the most superb panoramas to be had from any office structure in the city.

Necessary water tanks and elevator machinery are hidden below a roof of tile. Surmounting the tower will be a revolving light that has been planned as an aid to navigation.

The bank and the office building entrances both face Broadway. The building en-

trance is provided with a spacious lobby with wainscot of Sienna marble and a Tennessee marble floor. The lobby is to be decorated with mural paintings. Bronze gates will separate it from the safe deposit vaults and the secondary entrance to the main banking rooms.

Sculptured bronze doors open to the building's four high-speed elevators. Great stress is laid on the elevator service. The machines are the latest type and have full-length control. A waiting passenger on any floor has but to push the button indicating the direction he wishes to go and the next car passing in that direction will stop and open its doors automatically. If the car is full the signal will be transferred to the next car going in the direction desired. Floors will be called by passengers at the main floor, the operator will press buttons that will make the car stop as required. An interesting feature will be the high speed of the cars. The maximum speed will be 660 feet per minute. Few buildings have elevator speeds of more than 300 feet.

PROVIDE PLENTY LIGHT

Special attention has been given to the corridors in providing light and attractiveness. Marble wainscot will be of beautiful texture and office doors are of paneled pyramid plate glass. Even the electric fixtures in the corridors are of a special type to diffuse light lengthwise of the corridor.

The bank will occupy the basement, first and mezzanine floors of the building with the exception of a single store room on Sixth street.

HISTORICAL PHOTOS AND ARTICLES FROM THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ARCHIVES ARE COMPILED BY MERRIE MONTEAGUDO @SDUNIONTRIBUNE.COM. SEARCH THE U-T HISTORIC ARCHIVES AT NEWSLIBRARY.COM/SITES/SDUB.