

OPINION

My worst critic is a fellow manager

Marlon (not his real name) is a manager from another department who is always critical, even for trivial things that don't affect his department's operations. Yesterday, he reported to our boss that my workers are habitually tardy when our attendance records show that their alleged violations are within allowable limits. I don't know how to deal with him. What's the cure? — Rainbow Connection.

"You can't solve a problem without eliminating its cause," says Ann Latham in *Forbes* (2017). Knowing the cause or reason for such problem is your first step. There are many possible reasons that are not apparent from your narration.

Could you be seen as a potential competitor for a plum position within the organization? Is Marlon working hard to rule you out from being selected? Does he not like you personally or does your management style contradict his own? Is there a personality conflict known only to Marlon?

Perhaps at some point you made Marlon look bad in the eyes of top management. Now, he's trying to get even. He could also be building an empire and wants your job and department.

If you still have no clue about Marlon's motives, the best thing is for you to discuss your problem with your boss.

If your boss has confidence in you and your ability to perform your job, then there's nothing to worry about. But what if your boss doesn't believe in you? That's a bigger problem. It's only a matter of time before you lose your job to Marlon or to another manager.

Even if you're in good graces with your boss, there's no assurance that he'll take your side indefinitely. Marlon may be playing a long game whose impact will only be apparent later, the way concrete is eroded by constant exposure to drops of water.

What are the possible remedies? Much depends on how brave you are. Do you have the capacity and strength to tackle Marlon head-on, at least one-on-one where you can discuss all the things that are bothering you? If so, then the first thing to do is to seek the permission of your boss.

Your boss must be informed of your work challenges with Marlon, and the first one to tell you what to do or not to do. He's on top of almost everything in your department. He should know if your plan to initiate direct confrontation with Marlon will do more harm than good.

If the boss is dissuading you from talking to Marlon, then you have no recourse but to follow his advice. Ask for other options to resolve the issue, such as having your boss act as an objective mediator. If he offers to intercede for you, accept right away.

You must understand that your boss needs to have a productive and an enjoyable workplace. He relies on you and Marlon to achieve organizational goals.

What if the boss tells you to settle the issue without his help? You may have heard some bosses encourage workers to show leadership and solve problems on their own.

If he tells you that, don't be alarmed. Instead, prepare to meet Marlon to understand his concerns. Take heed of the following considerations:

Find the right time and situation. Ask Marlon to set aside time to discuss your concerns. If he's asking for the agenda, cite a neutral topic that gives you sufficient flexibility to inject the issues that are bothering you. Be careful, however, not to give him the impression that he is being set up for an "ambush."

Be diplomatic. Be tactful. Accept your own mistakes and apologize — that is sometimes a good approach to take against a chronic complainer. Be warm and positive at all times, even if Marlon's body language turns awkward.

Specify your perceived issues. Talk about how Marlon views the tardiness issue and how it adversely affects his work or that of his own people. This way, you can zero in on the issue and at the same time counter it by raising the argument that your tardy workers enjoy a grace period before being considered officially late.

Don't be emotional. You may hear things you don't like during the meeting. Just the same, maintain your composure. If you lose your cool, you may be unable to act and think logically. If that happens, you'll be on the losing end. If Marlon continues to act emotionally, propose to adjourn the meeting right away.

Offer assistance, if needed. Perhaps you may have ignored a request for assistance from Marlon in the past. This is a difficult situation. It could be misinterpreted as you thinking he can't do his job properly.

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European shipping nations welcome EC ruling on PHL seafarers

BUSINESS CHAMBERS representing European countries with major shipping industries said they welcomed a European Commission (EC) decision to continue recognizing the qualifications of Filipino seafarers.

"The Joint Maritime Committee of the Dutch-, German-, Nordic- and Norwegian Chambers of Commerce welcomes the decision of the European Commission to continue the recognition of Filipino seafarers' certificates, which will ensure stability of employment for Filipino seafarers," the committee said in a statement on Thursday.

Tore Henriksen, Joint Maritime Committee chairman, said the decision is a "very positive development" for the Philippine maritime industry.

"It is commendable that the Philippine authorities have taken necessary steps towards complying with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), and have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of Filipino seafarers who contribute

significantly to the global shipping industry," Mr. Henriksen said.

On March 31, the European Commission said it would continue to recognize the certificates of Filipino seafarers, after having warned the Philippines that recognition would be withdrawn if certain standards remained unmet.

The Joint Maritime Committee consists of the Dutch, German, and Nordic Chambers of Commerce in the Philippines as well as the Philippines-Norway Business Council. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochoa**

Labor sector wants seafarers to be prepared for post-retirement shore-based work

By John Victor D. Ordoñez
Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT must consider input from trade unions to improve the employability of seafarers, including a proposal to prepare them for shore-based work once their contracts end, a labor federation said.

"They should develop programs that will help seafarers transition into shore-based jobs and other alternative employment opportunities when they retire or can no longer work at sea," Jose G. Matula, president of the Federation of Free Workers, said in a Viber message.

"Our seafarers are among the best in the world, and they deserve the best support and protection from the government and other stakeholders."

The European Commission (EC) decided to continue recognizing certificates issued by the Philippines to its seafarers. The EC cited the country's efforts to improve the system for training and certifying seafarers, while noting areas for improvement in the training system.

Mr. Matula said government agencies must work together to upgrade maritime education and training.

Last week, Migrant Workers Secretary Maria Susan V. Ople said the Department of Migrant Workers will work with the Commission on Higher Education and Maritime Industry Authority to address maritime training deficiencies.

The EC said last year that nearly 50,000 Filipino seafarers working on European vessels could lose their jobs if the Philippines does not act to address the deficiencies.

The European Maritime Safety Agency raised issues about the Philippines' compliance with European Union standards after an inspection in March 2020.

A year later, the EC warned the Philippines it would withdraw recognition of Filipino seafarers' certificates if it did not address deficiencies in training seafarers.

Francesco Gargiulo, chief executive officer of the International Maritime Employers Council has said it is crucial for the Philippines to help more seafaring graduates get jobs in the maritime industry.

Citing government data, he said only 3,000 out of 30,000 seafaring graduates yearly get jobs in the industry.

"The Federation of Free Workers is committed to advocating for the rights and welfare of Filipino seafarers and ensuring that they receive fair treatment, job security, and opportunities for career growth and development," Mr. Matula said.

Kremlin warns outlook for Black Sea fertilizer, grain deal is 'not so great'

MOSCOW/UNITED NATIONS — The Kremlin warned on Wednesday that the outlook for extending a deal beyond May 18 that allows the safe wartime export of grain and fertilizer from several Ukrainian Black Sea ports was not great as Russia's own such exports still faced obstacles.

The Ukraine grain Black Sea export deal was brokered by the United Nations and Turkey in July last year to help tackle a global food crisis that UN officials said had been worsened by the most deadly war in Europe since World War II.

"No deal can stand on one leg. It must stand on two legs," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "In this regard, of course, judging by the state of play today, the outlook (for its extension) is not so great."

To help persuade Russia to allow Ukraine to resume its Black Sea grain exports last year, a separate three-year agreement was also struck in July in which the United Nations agreed to help Russia with its food and fertilizer exports.

Mr. Peskov said this deal "has not worked and is not working so far."

Western powers have imposed tough sanctions on Russia over its Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine. Its food and fertilizer exports are not sanctioned, but Moscow says restrictions on payments, logistics and insurance are a barrier to shipments.

Last month, Russia only agreed to renew the Ukraine Black Sea grain export deal for at least 60 days, half the intended period. Moscow said it would only consider a further extension if several demands in relation to its own exports were met.

Those include allowing the Russian Agricultural Bank to return to the SWIFT payment system, allowing Russia to import agricultural machinery, the removal of insurance restrictions, port access for Russian ships and

cargo, and an unblocking of the financial activities of Russian fertilizer companies.

Moscow also wants a pipeline that delivers Russian ammonia to a Ukrainian Black Sea port to be restarted.

HERDING PEOPLE

When asked on Wednesday if any progress had been made on Russia's demands, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said UN officials were "trying to doggedly move the process forward," noting that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had little power.

"The secretary-general has no authority over SWIFT. He has no authority over member states that impose unilateral sanctions. He has no authority over insurance companies, shipping companies, he can't tell them what to do," he said. "We're trying to herd a whole group of people," added Mr. Dujarric.

The United States has pushed back on Moscow's demands, saying "the only prohibitions on food and fertilizer exports from Russia are those imposed by the government" of Russia.

Russia and Ukraine are two of the world's key agricultural producers, and major players in the wheat, barley, maize, rapeseed, rapeseed oil, sunflower seed and sunflower oil markets. Russia is also dominant in the fertilizer market.

The Ukraine Black Sea export agreement has allowed more than 27.5 million tonnes of food to be exported by Ukraine, and the United Nations says this has contributed to the lowering of food prices around the world.

But the UN World Food Programme warned earlier this month that food insecurity remains at unprecedented levels in 2023 as conflict, economic shocks, climate extremes and rising fertilizer prices continue to disrupt food production globally. — **Reuters**

Juul to pay \$462M to six US states, DC over youth addiction claims

NEW YORK — E-cigarette maker Juul Labs, Inc. agreed on Wednesday to pay \$462 million over eight years to settle claims by six US states including New York and California, along with the District of Columbia (D.C.), that it unlawfully marketed its addictive products to minors.

The deal, which also included Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts and New Mexico, means that San Francisco-based

Juul has now settled with 45 states for more than \$1 billion, putting most of the long-running litigation over its business practices to rest. The company did not admit wrongdoing in the settlement.

The various states had accused Juul of falsely marketing its e-cigarettes as less addictive than cigarettes and targeted minors with glamorous advertising campaigns.

"Juul's lies led to a nationwide public health crisis and put addictive products in the hands of minors who thought they were doing something harmless," New York Attorney General Letitia James said at a news conference.

"Today is another step forward in our fight to protect our kids from getting hooked on vaping and nicotine," California Attorney General Rob Bonta added.

Juul said in a statement that use of its products by people under age 18 has fallen by 95% since the fall of 2019, when it changed its marketing practices as part of a "company-wide reset."

While Juul continues to sell its e-cigarettes in tobacco and menthol flavors, with limited advertising, its market share has fallen from a once-commanding 75% in 2018 to less than 30%. — **Reuters**

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