

**A**s you work on improving your team, consider having each member take a step back and do some “spring cleaning” by assessing themselves and those around them. Applying spring cleaning to each team member reminds me of different kinds of boxes with different shapes and sizes representing each team member’s unique life experiences and talents. Our boxes—or our minds—hold a collection of all our personal life experiences. This collection consists not only of the good lessons we’ve learned, but also the negative outcomes of some of our experiences, such as negative thoughts and words we’ve held about a failure. Every deed, every thought and everything we’ve experienced is in our box. Some of the items in one team member’s box may be similar to another member, but they are not identical. That’s what makes each and every one of us unique and a valued member of the team.

Consultant and author Marie Kondo has said, “The objective of cleaning is not just to clean, but to feel happiness living within that environment.” With your work environment, it’s important to not just go through the motion of cleaning. Instead, make sure that each member transforms their attitudes in order to improve, creating a team environment where we can all co-exist within the parameters of our diversity and blossom into a good place of challenge and growth. And further aligning with Ms. Kondo’s objective, let’s consider ways we can take a critical assessment of the contents of our box. What needs to be cleaned out and what should remain in order to instill team excellence?

### **Appreciate Your Uniqueness**

Rummage through your box and consider how unique, special and valued you are to your team. Our box is like our fingerprints, which are distinctive to each of us; scientists say there isn’t a duplicate fingerprint in any two people in the whole world. You’ve got to admit that’s pretty amazing. That makes you one of a kind! As you sort through your box, take a moment to celebrate your uniqueness and what your team would miss if you weren’t there.

### **Don’t Compare Yourself to Others**

Let’s face it—we tend to compare our boxes with others. However, it’s really unfair to compare ourselves to anyone. Comparison is a trap, because we always seem to want what we don’t have, and they tend to distract us from who we are. If we insist on measuring up to others, we’ll never fulfill our true potential. We’ll never fill our own boxes with the right stuff.

### **They Need What You Have**

We’ve all gone through some tough experiences and wondered if we were enough or wondered why we were chosen for the team in the first place. But we should realize that the difficult experiences we have weathered has become a gift for someone else. The lessons we learned becomes our truths. We’re able to help others and hopefully save them from that heartbreak and frustration. The guidance we’ve received from life experiences should go into our box and when someone needs something from your box, be generous. What you’ve learned is paramount for building character, growing confidence and strengthening

# SPRING CLEANING AND TEAM EXCELLENCE

Determining what needs to be cleaned out and what should remain

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backbone. By unequivocally giving yourself away, you help others by equipping them with ideas from your character, confidence and courage. What gems can you pull from your box to help a team member? Remember that when you help one member, you're helping the entire team.

### Take an Inventory

Although we all try to fill our boxes with good things (kindness, consideration, forgiveness, patience, empathy, a gentle word, etc.), we sometimes throw junk in it as well. It's a good idea to take an inventory of what's in your box, especially what needs to be tossed. You probably know what they are: negative thoughts about yourself, jealousy, anger and a judgmental attitude. If you don't make a conscious list of what to throw away, you'll procrastinate in cleaning out your box. When it comes to maintaining a healthy box, less is more. In other words, we need fewer bad attitudes and negative thoughts. We should clean out our boxes and keep only those things that build character and allow room for new experiences. This way we won't haul old baggage into new opportunities.

### Moving Forward

Once our boxes have been cleaned out, it's important that we don't throw old things back in. Life events are gifts to stretch us, make us grow, mature us and improve our character. Make room for more compassion, empathy, understanding and caring for others. Those are the kinds of things we should keep in our boxes. When you clean out your box, throw out the negative things people have said about you and recount your own virtues. Find anything in your box that doesn't promote you, edify you or confirm a positive attitude about you, and get rid of them. Why should we periodically inventory our boxes and clean them up? We eventually become what we carry in our box.

### In Summary

What's in your box? Give yourself a good start and consistently take an inventory of the attitudes that may be holding you back. Get rid of them. If you start to come up with ideas of why certain (non-productive) attitudes should stay in your box, then stop! You're still holding on to junk and eventually, you'll create a compelling reason for keeping junk where it doesn't belong. You were never meant to hold on to the pollution in your life. Therefore, when you can function within your high realm of strengths, then you become a strong, liberated and highly valued member of your team.

Ready to roll up your sleeves? 🧐



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