

“RETURNING HUMAN VALUES TO THE WORKPLACE”



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The speed of business and the push to do work smarter, faster and more cheaply has pressured managers and their employees for unprecedented output. Unfortunately, relationships between managers and their employees seem to be simultaneously deteriorating under this constant demand for greater productivity.

Leaders need to slow down and balance the demands and pressures of performance with attending to their employee's needs as human beings. Making a more conscious effort to be attentive to employee issues will lead to increased motivation, productivity and lowered turnover, all of which will have a significant and positive impact on the bottom line.

While the following may seem obvious or common sense to many, these are areas that are being frequently ignored or overlooked, to the detriment of vital employee relationships:

LISTEN MORE: The problem with managers today is that they talk too much and listen too little. Or, they appear to be listening, when in fact their minds are otherwise occupied making judgments, preparing a response, or not even being present at all. This “half listening “ is dangerous in that things can be easily misheard or misunderstood, which can create problems later. (sometimes with considerable negative impact to the business) In addition, employees instinctively know when you are not giving them your full attention, giving them the impression that they are not worth listening to, or that something else is more important to you.

ACKNOWLEDGE AND APPRECIATE: When businesses implement employee surveys, one aspect that comes to the surface most frequently is not feeling valued by their employer. Appreciation can come in many forms, but the easiest is just taking the time to say “thank you.” Don't get fooled by your rationale that this is not necessary because it is what you are paying them for. Everyone needs acknowledgement. Even if the job was not done exactly the way you wanted it, remember to appreciate the effort first, then offer constructive feedback if needed.

LIGHTEN UP! Have the pressures of work clouded your sense of humor? Do you take yourself too seriously? Finding the humor in a situation or letting some silliness out on occasion keeps us in balance and allows for the emergence of more creative problem solving at work. It also opens up a connection between people, enhancing the relationships so that they can not only work better together, they can have the opportunity to actually enjoy one another.

SHOW SOME INTEREST IN THEIR “OTHER” LIVES: This does not mean sitting around chatting all day, or asking personal questions about how they spent last Saturday night. But it does mean inquiring in an interested and caring way about the non-work part of their lives. If someone has an elderly parent in a nursing home, for instance, you might occasionally inquire how the parent is doing. It is not only a gesture of caring, it lets the person know that you understand that there is more their life than just their work persona.

Treating people as people is something that is worth making the time for. The most effective leaders already know and practice this. It is not only a “nice” way to be; it is proving more and more to be good for business. Showing employees that you value them pays off in quality interactions, enhanced decision making, and trusted relationships.

(Adapted from author's column, previously published in the Syracuse Newspaper)