

IN SEARCH OF HONOR....

What's at the Heart of Trust? Touch...

By
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How many hours and dollars does your employer spend on recognition or reward programs that seem to have little or no impact? The organizational cynics ridicule and point out the inconsistencies of such programs. Dilbert cartoons proliferate. Why? Because often times these efforts are done with the absence of “touch.”

Before the sexual harassment attorneys start preparing their briefs, let's make it clear that we are in no way referring to or suggesting physical touch. Instead, we are talking about the immense power to use words to honor the spirit of another human being. Company T-shirts, a gift from the company catalogue, or a framed parchment certificate, just can't cut it when 57% of employees think the boss does not care about them as a fellow human being.

For those who are a bit ill at ease with the mushy stuff, let me assure you that we are talking simple here. This could be as simple as saying “Good morning.” You might be surprised to know how many employees told us that the boss doesn't even acknowledge them in passing. Taking a moment to ask about the kids, the latest fishing trip, or mom's return from the hospital, says, “You are more than a working machine to me, and I care about you as a whole person.” Besides, this simple action says, “I'm accessible.”

Before you can find the right touch, you must know who your employees are. What are they all about? What is important to them? Do they have any hobbies, outside interests? Do they have any worries? Burdens? Crises?

Touch can't be relegated to a program. It can't be monitored and tracked for results. Models can't be created and words can't be crafted so that the manager knows exactly what to say. You see, touch isn't an exact kind of expression. It is an art form. It is custom tailored to the individual,

expressly crafted by the individual who is doing the touching. There are no patterns or molds, and each touch must be specifically crafted. You may argue, then, that this could be time consuming. After all, we all know that in our pre-fab world we don't have time for hand-crafting. However, I suggest that it takes very little time compared to the impact it delivers. Touch doesn't cost money. It just takes a leader who devotes some time to know what opens the heart of his employees. Then and only then are you capable of the magic of touch.

You may ask, "Why bother? We're not here to make people feel good, we're here to produce a product or a service." Well, that's true, but the magic of touch delivers much more than good feelings. The magic of touch establishes a comfort level between worker and leader. It sets the tone for open communications. With comfortable communications, workplace problems, solutions and ideas flow to the top rather than remain buried in the hum of the machinery and the routine of the status quo. Also, it unleashes creativity because you have invited the whole person to work not just a body or a pair of hands.

"Touch" is a tool that helps the leader manage the workplace spirit. Nurturing the workplace spirit deserves as much attention as managing the workplace budget. According to the president of a small mining company, he used "touch" in a four-year effort to recover from a \$45 million dollar loss to a \$25 million dollar profit. When asked about it, he said, "These people are great. They'll come through if you just talk to them." I wouldn't attribute this kind of turnaround solely to mini-conversations this dynamic leader initiated. Some wise business decisions were made here as well. But after witnessing his constant genuine display of caring and warmth, I found a magical connection between this leader and his people. Not everyone was "on board." Some people suspected his friendliness. As time went on, a few die-hard skeptics remained, but more and more people accepted this man as genuine. By attending to the heart as well as the budget, the trust level soared as well as the profits.

Join us as we go IN SEARCH OF HONOR...

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