

Are Your Staff Committed, Compliant Or Disaffected?

Like it or not, we live in a world where staff loyalty must be earned. Facing the difficulties and opportunities peculiar to the post-modern marketplace, businesses need their best team-members to contribute their heart and mind to the job and not just their body.

In spite of this, many organisations persist with Old World (Industrial Age) behaviours and attitudes which consistently produce **disaffected staff**.

Disaffected staff members watch the clock. Disaffected staff members do the minimum required to secure their take-home pay. Disaffected staff members grumble and spread the negativity like a virus. Disaffected staff members sometimes look for greener pastures when you most need them to stay.

Inefficiency, low morale and poor performance can be due to management's behaviour toward staff and ineffective communication methods as much to any faults in the employees themselves.

Industrial Age versus Knowledge Worker Age

Stephen R Covey (writing in *The 8th Habit*) makes the following points about the need to upgrade our leadership practices:

- The resources of the Industrial Age were *things*. And *this included* people. Your workers were essentially pieces of equipment that were replaceable. The machine age gave us our view of accounting which makes people an expense and machines an asset!
- Though we live in a *Knowledge Worker Age*, many organisations operate in a controlling Industrial Age model that suppresses the release of human potential. This is at a time when we most need the diversity and resourcefulness of *team*.
- When people are managed like things, they can come to believe that **choice** must be earned and is **beyond the reach** of most people. In the workplace, they **wait for orders** rather than problem-solving and initiating activity, thus adding to the workload of their supervisors.
- If you see and treat people as things, you will ALWAYS get one of the following responses: Rebellion/Quitting; Malicious Obedience; Willing

Compliance (which sounds good but really just represents someone who never does more than you have specifically asked for, whose heart is somewhere else).

- If you treat someone kindly, pay them fairly (this doesn't always need to be cash), use them creatively and release them to serve human needs in principled ways, you will tend to get either: heartfelt cooperation, heartfelt commitment or creative excitement.

Upgrading Our People Skills

If you recognise the need for your staff to become significantly more committed in body heart *and mind*, experiment with the following ideas:

- Managers need to spend as much time *building rapport and relationships with staff members as they do with customers or clients*. By treating your workplace as a community, you will help create a community. This can begin with simple actions such as:
 - commenting positively on personal items they keep in their workspace,
 - finding small practical ways to help them do their job,
 - consistently taking time to listen to them, or
 - finding ways to remember details about them and their lives.
- *Take an interest in your team*. Even if you're not naturally a people person - if you are task-focused - you can still find ways to make *fellow staff interesting* to you.
 - It might mean turning your *innate* curiosity toward them ("Why is Wilma always so happy? What could Fred be capable of?")
 - It may mean *taking a task-approach* to people. ("I need to uncover what motivates Betty and which of her strengths have not yet been uncovered here at work. What are three steps I could take to find that out?")
 - It might require *managing yourself* so that you *develop and maintain empathy* towards them. ("What else is going on in Barney's life that might be adding to his stress when I send him a new directive?")
- *Find ways to suspend your opinions, biases and anxieties*. Ask your staff questions, appreciate the answers they give, seek to see your organisation's difficulties, challenges and opportunities through the eyes of all the team-members.
- Seek to *uncover the ways in which your team-members' own personal visions and goals overlap those of your organisation*. The sharpest organisations find ways to help their employees reach both visions by the same activity.

- Create *opportunities for employees to contribute their own ideas and methods* to reaching goals and overcoming challenges.
- Get to know your staff members well enough so that you can both *stretch and reward them in a way that is meaningful to them as individuals*.

These kinds of actions move most team-members out of *occupying a desk* and into *owning responsibility* for the organization's growth and health.

When you look carefully you find that most visions are one person's (or one group's) vision imposed on an organization. Such visions at best command compliance but not commitment...

The committed person brings an energy, passion and excitement that cannot be generated if you're only compliant, even genuinely compliant. The committed person doesn't play by the rules of the game. He is responsible for the game.

A group of people truly committed to a common vision is an awesome force. They could accomplish the seemingly impossible.

- Peter M Senge

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