

CORPORATE COACH



Q&A

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■ GETTING TO THE ROOT OF WORKPLACE ISSUES

Q: Two years ago, we set up our textile factory, and now it has 100 odd staff working here. We had a good start with everyone committing to make our business the best it could be. Things goes well as planned, and we have been meeting our production targets as well.

The funny thing is although the external results look good, this cannot be said about the "internal results," by which I mean the morale of the workplace. People are complaining about loss of interest in their work; with many saying they do not feel good here, and got tired easily.

More worrisome are the compounding effect of the many silly mistakes they do recently, adding to the lack of punctuality. Also misunderstandings and conflicts amongst colleagues seem to be the topic of the day. We no longer seem to have the excitement and the high energy we used to enjoy at the workplace. What is your view on this matter, and what should we do? -

Incomprehensible

A: It seems to me there is high stress in the work environment, and your people are feeling the heat. Something has been simmering beneath the surface, creating a delusion that nothing is wrong.

It is a good thing for you to realise this before things get worse, if nothing is done. The paradox about stress is sometimes you do not realise you are physically or mentally overworked. The mere fact that they got into this state, is wake up call, for positive changes in the environment.

The Bottom Line: There are a number of actions you can take. Firstly, get close to them so you know exactly what is happening and what they are going through.

Secondly, assess their capabilities and threshold for pressure, and tailor make their work accordingly. One thing to do is to give them autonomy to decide what they want to do. Lastly, make the workplace a more pleasant place to be in, by encouraging interaction and social activities among colleagues.

Powerful Questions: If you are a member of the workforce, how do you feel about working here? What causes you to feel this way? What is still missing? And what do you want to do about it?

■ APPRECIATION AT THE WORKPLACE

Q: There are many complaints about the lack of appreciation at this workplace these days. Until now, I cannot fathom the root cause of this problem. If it is about the pay package, then I think these disgruntled employees have unfair expectations, as we are amongst the best paymasters in the

region.

Not to mention, we have run numerous achievers' campaigns with attractive awards given to qualifiers. Is there more we can do, and something the management has missed out? -

Ungrateful Lot

A: Your story reminds me of a case where the father was heart sick after discovering his son has forged his credit card. He could not believe this happened, because he was very generous with his son. There was also a song by the Beatles entitled 'Money can't buy me love', which spoke of the same thing.

The morale of the story is that we should not be hoodwinked that money can do everything. Life is more complex than that. Your cash rewards can be quickly negated by other 'misdeeds' in the workplace that you ignored, or are not aware of. Perhaps you think they should not expect any more rewards or appreciation, because they are already well paid!

The Bottom Line: Appreciation at the workplace boils down to respecting employees' rights. This can range from simple things like respecting their thoughts, feelings, values, strengths (and differences) to how they want to participate and contribute their time and effort to the organisation.

You need to do an honest check on the 'appreciation gaps' at the workplace and quickly find ways to close them by 'humanising' your leadership approach.

Powerful Questions: Are you well engaged with your employees? How much do you know them as individuals, than merely workers? What are their desires and motivation, and how do you help fulfill them?



COACHING ON EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

