

Never forget that values are caught rather than taught



Following on from the last article, which identified the first four of Ten Commandments that would provide standards for making basic life and business decisions, now we deal with next three. In doing so it is essential that all ten be taken together. In a sense no one commandment is more important than the rest, although it may be necessary that you or your organisation concentrate on the one that is most significant at that point in time.

Show respect for elders: It is fully appreciated by most the play that has been made by some leading organisations that they do not, and indeed will not, take age into account in recruitment, promotion and training of staff. While the theory of this is sound, not too many “elderly” folk are holding senior management positions. They have been seen refilling shelves and dealing with customer’s queries but that is where it seems to end.

Certainly our younger managers attending seminars, courses and functions see many folk there much older than them. But our older managers are often in a minority of one and so would encourage a greater age range to attend. Don’t let age put you off, as we are never too old to learn.

What we are talking about here is also about respecting the wisdom and expertise of our elders because moral values are really caught rather than taught. Tradition coupled with strong relationships and personal understanding of why we do what we do is the best form of effective learning and showing mutual respect. But there is a trend today that believes that no matter in what situation “the end justifies the means”. What seems to be important is the bottom line and anything that will increase this, short of breaking the law, is acceptable. Look at our politicians.

It would appear that expediency is the motivatory force for many modern managers, and that this is something they claim that older folk cannot cope

with. However the truth is that older folk don't want to "cope" with expediency. They know from experience that to do so is often short term, can rebound with serious repercussions on the reputation, viability and ongoing success of the organisation and themselves.

So it seems the jury is out as to whether organisations will play lip service to the legislation that is being introduced later this year or whether they will genuinely employ older seasoned individuals as leaders and role models at all levels of management. It will be the shrewd managers who will benefit from respecting their elders and learning from them. They have a lot to offer.

Show respect for human life, dignity and rights: The value of human life and the worth of the individual apply to every level of human relationship whether it is the relationship with your God, family, employer, colleagues, those who report to you or of course yourself. But this demands right attitudes and actions and Stephen Covey, got it exactly right when he said that one of the 7 principles for successful living was to "think win-win".

In other words a fundamental criteria for effective decision-making is to practise the golden rule that you should treat others, as you want to be treated.

Respect between manager and employee, and vice versa of course, gives confidence to perform at the highest level of creativity, energy and productivity and is crucial to long term profitability. And surely this is what we all want.

It also means satisfying customer needs with the best products and services, conducting all operations in a manner that protects the health and safety of employees, complying with all laws and establishing personnel policies and procedures with the view that individuals are unique.

Even when making staff redundant it is essential that clearly defined policies and procedures are based on regard for the dignity of the individual and are stated at the induction of new employees.

But you do not really need reminded that duties go hand and hand with rights and this is why the win-win attitude is right. So we need employees to think about how they can ensure; that they are contributing to the health and safety of themselves and others: that they are complying with all laws and statutory regulations; and that they are following all personnel polices and procedures.

The day is fast approaching when those employees who, lets be honest, have abused the work/life balance and sickness and absence policies (to name but two), will regret that their value systems were not better balanced. They will be the ones who will likely suffer a win-lose situation as organisations seek to achieve cost savings in order to survive. And not before time too.

Maintain a stability of sexes and the family: The family unit is in viewed as the foundational institution to every culture and society. Now this may not be very popular thinking with some but historically when the family has been strong, the culture has been strong as well.

In that context marriage and singleness are equally honourable, and good management requires respect for men, as husbands/partners, and women as wives /partners. That respect must equally regard men and women as persons, irrespective of their religion, gender, race marital status etc. Organisations nowadays have no authority or responsibility over the family but effective relationships at home are, a prerequisite for effective performance at work. This is why organisations are increasingly providing confidential counselling services to employees who are experiencing personal problems that are effecting their work performance.

So organisations must have policies that rightly offer equal employment opportunities for both men and women and that respect the uniqueness and dignity of every individual. Management decisions involving workload, deadlines, quotas and travel scheduling should be made in the light of personal, marital and family needs.

Again a balance is necessary. It is incumbent on both the employer & employee that the demands of the job are clearly articulated at the commencement of the employment, and that any changes thereafter are openly and frankly discussed and that a win-win solution is, if possible, achieved.

Remember any organisation's best asset is its people. It is said of the land that you get best results if you feed it well and work it hard. Is there a lesson here not just for the employer but also for the employee? If you want to feed well then you must work hard. You can't have one without the other.

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