

In the Bulletin magazine last month it was suggested that: “the new CEO will be a healer”.

And, at the time of writing this email, a client who works for a Federal Government Department made a timely comment: they were inspired by the Department's Secretary who this week commented that one of the keys to good leadership is 'caring for people'.

Smart managers and leaders recognise that employees' health, happiness, energy and engagement are critical to business success and workplace satisfaction.

What could they do to add healing to their list of roles? In reviewing a selection from my stock of clippings and articles, I noticed that help is probably no further away than the news that crosses managers' desks everyday – and it's not only about healing, it's also about prevention.

1. Make work purposeful

Dr Russell D'Souza (Senior lecturer in Psychiatry at Melbourne University) observes that loss of purpose leads to high burnout rates and depression, and in turn this demoralises those around them. The role of the leader is to bring back purpose into the work that people do. -- (Bulletin Magazine, "Down with Work", 7 June 2005) [*Thank you, Greg, for sending me this article*] ☺

2. Think 'we', be positive and giggle

"Leaders are merchants of hope, who think 'we' instead of me. They nurture passion and positive energy and give positive constructive feedback....giggling is also recommended". -- (Interview with international management thinker, Manfred Kets de Vries; Australian Financial Review, 28 June 2005)

3. Remove fear

To build confidence, and to encourage people to take risks, responsibility and initiative, you need to take the fear out of the organisation. -- (Interview with John Roberts, Professor, Graduate School of Business, Stanford University; Management Today magazine, August 2005)

4. Encourage playtime

Organisations are increasingly employing full-time and part-time *internal* events coordinators (going beyond the social club idea). This investment responds to the needs of all, including Gen X; reduces stress; and results in improved working relationships, morale, interpersonal skills and productivity -- (Australian Financial Review, 5 July 2005)

5. Provide challenges and growth

More engaged workers perform better and stay in their jobs longer. Employee research firm, ISR, found that the key to employee engagement is the provision of growth and development opportunities, and that this is not being done well enough in Australia. -- (Australian Financial Review, 7 Dec 2004)

6. Don't let work suffocate leisure

Ross Gittins (Economics Editor of The Age and Sydney Morning Herald) comments on balance, working at the expense of leisure, and using higher wages for conspicuous consumption rather than taking leave. His message is a warning not only for the 'production obsessed managers', but also for employees. -- (The Age 12 July 2005) [*Thank you, Luke, for sending the link*]

7. Allow autonomy and control

Research shows that jobs which combine high demands and low control contributed to stress and depression. The best kind of job has high demands and high control. -- (Business Review Weekly, 28 May 2005) [*Implications: managers should set clear goals, enable staff to determine how to go about their work, and coach and support staff through that process. This is backed up by positive psychology research which stresses the importance of building flow activities into work.*]

8. Prevent job burnout

To minimise staff burnout, managers should ensure that employees are clear about their roles, and are provided with development opportunities. Managers should undertake to have regular, everyday conversations to achieve this. -- (Sydney Morning Herald, 26 February 2005)

9. Know what is unique

Gallup Organization's research found that great managers discover what is unique about each person. They have an appreciation for individuality; they don't try to change their employees' styles. One way to identify a person's strengths is to ask "What was the best day at work you've had, why, and what were you doing". -- (Australian Financial Review, 29 March 2005)

10. Communicate

Research and surveys reveal that staff engagement levels increase if managers communicate openly and honestly. Managers under pressure to perform can forget to spend *appropriate* time with staff, yet developing stronger relationships, communication and feedback loops can be just what a manager needs to do to improve productivity -- (Australian Financial Review, 2 November 2004)

11. And, then there's sleep

Time for a little snooze? 'Demos', a UK think tank, released a report last year on sleep: "the solution is not an overhaul of working hours, but a more proactive and flexible approach to how we spend our time at work, with rooms in offices dedicated to power napping and a change in company culture so those who need a decent night's sleep are no longer perceived as quitters" (Australian Financial Review, 9 November 2004)

About this article

I aim to provide information to help you and your staff with your personal and professional development. Each month, topics covered are based on areas of interest raised by clients and colleagues. Material is drawn from journals, books, articles and shared experiences.

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