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LEADERSHIP'S IMPACT ON COMPANY CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION: INCONCEIVABLE!

Raise your hand if you have ever shown up for work, looked at the employee entrance with a feeling of dread, and just sat in your car, numb until you felt ready to face another day in the trenches.

I'll go first. Hi, my name is Melissa, and I have worked for at least one employer where showing up each day felt like being subjected to the ultimate torture dished out by Count Rugen and Prince Humperdinck and their "machine" in the cult classic, Princess Bride. Maybe clocking in didn't actually suck away one year of my life, but the idea of going through the motions for another eight hours was enough to make me want to leave skid marks in the parking lot, or at the very least whimper.

If you've never experienced this phenomenon, congratulations! You have found the Holy Grail, a team worth showing up for, and your passion. Or perhaps you think this doesn't really happen, likely because you're the leader, the CEO, the President, the one in charge of it all. Trust me, Prince Humperdinck, it happens. If this is the case, you owe it to your employees to find out if they are happy or at least satisfied and to your bottom line to find out if they are working their hardest for you.

Chances are the work doesn't make your employees dread showing up; there was a reason why they excitedly accepted an offer of employment from you (who wouldn't want to be part of your Brut Squad). It's the company culture or even *gasp* management's leadership style—a dreaded combination of toxicity and apathy leading to high turnover and low productivity—and it's up to you to fix things. HINT: It does not involve pizza parties, game rooms, or jean days. It's more likely to involve

management and communication. Peter Drucker may have said it best when he observed, "So much of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to work."

I believed wholeheartedly in the vision and mission of my employer. I lived those corporate values. I also danced a jig in the Parking Lot of Tears the day I resigned. Unsurprisingly, leaders have a tremendous impact on morale, and studies find a direct link between job satisfaction and burnout with leadership. But leadership—transformational leadership, isn't a skill you develop overnight. You have your work cut out for you; there is actually a science to leadership.

As the head honcho, you need to critically look at yourself and how managers interact with their teams. Is there goal setting? Job performance feedback? Who is driving the mission? How much stress do your managers feel? Don't underestimate the impact of stress in the workplace. The 2017 study, Leader Strain And Follower Burnout: Exploring the Role of Transformational Leadership Behaviour, links transformational leadership behaviors and workplace stressors. Mediating the relationship between leader strain and follower burnout and is something we should all pay attention to. There is an art to leadership science, and you'll find the key lies in constructive feedback and active listening.

Listen when your employees tell you they are unhappy. Really listen. Sara Stibitz lays out some good starting points in her series published through the Harvard Business Review on Managing Yourself. Make your meetings a priority, set aside time without distractions, and ask questions. I brought up issues with my supervisor on more than one occasion, particularly difficulties with one co-worker. They told me to hang in there. Things were changing, and a new position was about to be posted. Something did change, just not for the better, and the co-worker was named my direct report. So, perhaps most importantly, remember when communicating with your employees, be honest. Don't string an unhappy employee along with false hope and empty promises.

As a team leader, it is also essential to recognize not all personalities work well together and take the time to understand who is working for you. When it developed its [Business Chemistry System](), Deloitte identified four distinct work styles: pioneer, integrator, driver, and guardian, which gives people a common language for understanding and collaboration. Miracle Max was a pioneer, to be sure, but where would he have been without his wife, Valerie, to drive him forward while performing his miracles? Whether you use Business Chemistry or some other system, invest some energy and money into figuring out who your employees are and share your findings with them.

After observing your employees, it's time to decide if you are ready to move your team and business to the next level? Don't ignore company culture. Will the Brut Squad stand together when the castle is stormed, or will they scatter to the wind once the Dread Pirate Roberts shows up with his crew? Do you know what the next level looks like for your team? Dave Logan, John King, and Halee Fischer-Wright make a compelling case for the five different stages people tend to operate in and explain how your team can't move forward until they are coached through each stage in their book, Tribal Leadership.

Change is uncomfortable, and it isn't easy to navigate. But if employees are weeping in the parking lot before their shift starts, things clearly aren't working, and it's time to embrace the uncomfortable and take drastic action.

As the head of your organization, you're going to make some hard decisions. Perhaps your GM for the last decade isn't the right choice to move you through the next 10 years, or your trusted VP has fostered the kind of culture that brings employees to tears. Maybe Vizzini wasn't the right person hired to start your war with Guilder and kidnap the Princess, and the Dread Pirate Roberts would have been the better choice to inspire and lead your team.

Communication isn't personal. It's interpersonal. Inconceivable, I know. But take it from an

employee who has been there, because personally, I'd like to see your business—and team—succeed.

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