

Urban Putty

The Newsletter of The Acorn Centre
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Sustainable Development of your Primary Resource— People

We have noted, with considerable interest, a growing eco-sense among thinkers, leaders and Canadian workers. There is a dynamic movement in the consciousness of our country, which sees an unmistakable, indisputable, and irreversible multiplicity of connections between all people, in all countries, all living organisms on all planets. This interconnectedness is heightened by the mounting evidence of climatic changes, changes to eco-systems, and the spread of bacteria, especially new and unknown forms of life.

The World Health Organization is being asked to monitor the impact of these changes, with a view to protecting various populations, working with various cultures and methodologies, all of them fighting the same enemy.

Pine beetles have already destroyed some half-million acres of Banff National Forest, because the warmer winters make survival of the menacing insect possible, when previously, their numbers were significantly reduced by the cold temperatures.

The Economic Roundtable on Healthy Minds and Healthy Workplaces is actively considering achievable benchmarks to executive leadership, to reduce absenteeism among workers, and to reduce the stress of undue workplace pressures on willing workers. Researchers at Harvard and the World Bank have predicted that by the year 2020, the leading cause of disability and death in the world will be depression.

As the CEO for the Canadian Mental Health Association (Ontario) Dr. Barbara Everett commented, in an interview (for our e-journal, workthatworks.ca) often workers who have been on Long Term Disability (LTD) for a physical ailment cannot return to work when that problem has cleared up, because they also suffer from a mental disorder which has never been diagnosed.

There is still a very large amount of work to do in order to create workplaces in which workers thrive, enhance their mental and emotional health and perform at an optimum level, not only of productivity, but also of relationship nurturing.

Common sense, increasingly supported by hard research evidence, tells us that people who really love going to work every morning, and who actually consider their workplace a healthy place for them to spend their days will naturally demonstrate a generosity, and creativity and courage and compassion and "leave their egos at the door". In many instances, the next frontier is to convince old-style managers that their 'Don Cherry' management style is unequivocally obsolete. Moreover, it is obsolete for all enlightened supervisors and for all employees for all time.

In a recent office discussion about the differences between management and leadership, the operational question that seemed to some of us to distinguish a

manager's response to a problem with an employee from a leader's response to the same problem with the same employee can be seen on several levels:

- Managers are often more quick to trot out their 'command' tone of voice;
- Managers are often more quick to seek an immediate settlement, whereas leaders explore options, as between two adults, seeking a common "yes" to the situation;
- Managers deploy their 'do it or else' more frequently and sooner, whereas leaders take the time and the opportunity to create unique resolutions which satisfy both partners;
- **Managers use the kind of thinking in which logic is in control of the mind;**
- **Leaders use the kind of thinking in which logic is at the service of the mind.**
- Leaders consider themselves adequate, whereas managers more often consider themselves less than adequate, in the situation;
- Leaders want to treat all workers as adults with individual aspirations, hopes and dreams, all of which merit respect and active consideration;
- Leaders believe that an imposed solution is less than their best performance;
- Leaders believe that all workers seek to bring their 'okayness' to work, if given the opportunity to do so, and the encouragement to try and the support to risk it, even for the very first time;

We are, each of us, a character with a unique perspective, special gifts and talents, specific narrative experiences that have contributed to the development of our worldview, and a unique passion and commitment to something larger than our personal selfish interests. This is more than our altruistic motives; it is also more than our specific skill to perform X or Y function; it is the sum of our character.

And that character is never to be squashed, or trampled, injured, or even offended in order to aggrandize another human being, no matter what rank relationship exists between the two individuals. Not only are we the guardians of our own characters, but we are also the guardians of all the characters with whom we interact.

This is not only a moralistic, or religious or ethical perspective; it is a cosmic truth. Compassion for our smallest children, and most frail plants and most threatened species includes compassion for our co-workers, and our supervisors and supervisees.

All organizations face the conundrum of wanting new ideas and not wanting to create an environment which 'coddles' the workers. The mind-set that seems to address this enigma is leadership of an environment which sustains all workers, all of the time, even when they are drafting new ideas, which are not quite profitable. In the new economy, we are not driven merely by sales, but by new and original ideas, concepts and insights.

To support the creativity of others means that while we grow new ideas from the weaknesses of their ideas, we do not either do not lower our standards, nor do we attack their person.

We all hate to confront the fear of being a nobody, so we all hate to admit a mistake. And yet, it is to the fool that we all must turn, and be permitted to turn, if we are

going to generate ideas, creativity, courage and new commercial ventures. As Martin Hellman, a discoverer of public key encryption writes:

The way to get to the top of the heap in terms of developing original research is to be a fool, because only fools keep trying. You have idea number 1; you get excited; it flops. Then you have idea number 2, you get excited, and it flops. Then you have idea number 99, you get excited and it flops. Only a fool would be excited by the 100th idea, but it might take 100 ideas before one really pays off. Unless you're foolish enough to be continually excited, you won't have the motivation, you won't have the energy to carry it through. God rewards fools.

(Quoted in Robert W. Fuller, *Somebodies and Nobodies*, New Society Publishers, 2002, p. 88.)

And The Acorn Centre wants to be an integral participant on all teams who take this matter seriously. In fact, we are so serious, that we want some commitment from potential clients that this is a direction they are prepared to consider, no matter how far along in the process they have already come.

And along with former President Clinton, we also see that for every organization (as he did for the U.S. generally), "There is nothing wrong with the U.S. that what is right about it will not correct!" So we start from the principle that there is health in everyone, and in every organization, and our task is to join your people in finding the health, the plenty, the creativity and in both exposing its teachings and learnings and celebrating its blessings.

Anyone interested? Give us a call, 1-866-511-4769 or visit our [website](#).