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Lisa's view - a recap of 2006's trends in the workplace

As a business consultant and speaker, I interact with more companies, trade associations, and people than the average person. One of my passions and advantages in the workplace has been that I tend to see trends in people, situations, etc, and so I thought as 2006 closes, it would be a good time to discuss a few workplace trends (based on my observations, reading, discussions, etc).

First, with the beginning of the baby boomer retirement, we are beginning to see a shortage of quality workers. Many times, as older workers retire, their knowledge retires with them. While the future retiree is employed, their job might appear simpler than it is (perhaps because they have done it for 30 years), and the younger employees think they can do it better in a more technologically advanced way. However, when the person retires, it is no longer as simple as it appeared. Or, they don't know what they don't know - how often has it happened to you that you think things are going well because you don't realize you've missed a step or a critical component, and the effects don't show up until months or years later? In addition to the knowledge retiring with the retiree, there will be fewer workers available. Companies will compete for the best and brightest. We will need to find ways to complete the task with fewer employees. And, what about the resulting chronic shortage of leadership? Good leaders will be in demand. Excellent leaders will have the power of choice.

Second, the globalization of the economy is changing our competition from the competition "in our own backyard" to "global" - even though global competition has existed for many years, it is becoming more of a critical factor today. How many of your suppliers are from other countries? How many of your customers? A company must be better today to achieve the same results it did just a year ago. This changes the entire rulebook - suddenly, you need to know the global competitive situation, how to compete in completely new ways (with different product and service differentiators, international logistics, languages, etc), and with different cost advantages (the price of labor, oil, etc). It will require increased business and financial literacy to "stand still". On the other hand, global competition provides new opportunities to those thinking ahead to how to take advantage of the changing environment. Which do you want to be?

Third, with the emergence of the baby boomer retirement era and globalization, virtual teams are becoming the norm. The companies that succeed in the new marketplace will be those that find ways to achieve profit through people. You cannot stick your head in the sand and think that all employees will be in the same office, working 8 to 5, etc. Instead, how can you have the best people? And then find a way to make it a strategic advantage in the marketplace? By finding ways to make virtual teams a success. If you can have the best minds (such as the parents who want to work part time while taking care of their children, retirees who are interested in part time work, a resource in another country who has the perfect expertise for your company, etc) working together effectively, you will come out on top!

Who cares about trends? My perspective is that the person/ company who finds ways to take advantage of these trends while building on their strengths will succeed in 2007 and beyond. The key is take the time to take a step back from the day-to-day and the details to see the big picture and brainstorm the possibilities.

Lisa's Tips: Life balance for the New Year

I hear tremendous talk about balancing work and home life, so I thought a good way to start the New Year would be to brainstorm a few life balance ideas:

1. You have one life: As my consulting mentor (Alan Weiss) says, you have one life. There is no reason you have to keep your work life and your home life completely separate. If it will be better for you if you make a work call from vacation and therefore can take additional vacations, why not? Or, if you leave work early to attend your son's soccer game and work an hour on the weekend on a project you need to finish, why not?
2. Plan a vacation: Since life doesn't stop, there will never be a perfect time. So, just plan one and enjoy it. Look around you - see things you haven't seen before. Enjoy the simple pleasures.
3. Give yourself rewards: Who says you have to achieve a huge milestone (such as a promotion) to reward yourself? As you achieve small victories (even getting a small yet undesirable task complete), reward yourself - get a Starbucks coffee, play with your dog or cat, or whatever.
4. Give to others: Take the time to find a way to give to others, and it will enrich your life. There are many ways to give. Find one that appeals to you. Perhaps volunteer to teach a class, work with underprivileged children, or just smile at an overworked service provider and find something positive to comment on (a friend of mine does this continually and often makes people's days!)
5. Take care of yourself: exercise, eat healthy and remember preventative care. It doesn't have to be overwhelming; for example, walk the long route instead of taking the shortcut, replace part of your diet with something slightly healthier (but don't give up everything - it will be extremely hard to last!), and miss a non-important meeting and go to your dentist appointment instead.

Recommended Reading

["Why We Want You to Be Rich"](#) by Donald Trump and Robert Kiyosaki - whether you like the authors or not, they come together to tell an intriguing story of the need for financial education/ literacy in the United States. They believe you cannot solve money problems with money. You can only solve money problems with financial education. And they want to teach you to be rich. It is an interesting book with concepts that can be utilized for your personal finances, your company, and the world economy.

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