

ARE YOU A COMPASSIONATE LEADER?

LOOK AT HOW YOU INTERACT WITH EMPLOYEES AND MAKE SURE YOU DON'T RESENT ANYONE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK | CONTRIBUTOR

IS IT compassion or fear that is residing in you that is the overriding component in your decision-making process in holding your employees accountable? That is the real question. This month we get to listen to a very successful coach, Brian Hunnicut, explain what he experiences with his shop owner clients on the subject.

When I ask my clients why they make the decisions that they do about their employees, the No. 1 response is because they are not comfortable with how it makes them feel to hold an employee accountable. They do not want to be that "mean person." They do not want to be seen as overbearing or unsupportive. Most of the time in each of our pasts (before we became the boss), we were treated badly by a boss. We swear that when we become the boss we will not treat people that way. We will treat them like an adult, and they will bask in our glory.

So what happens? Why do they slide and not step up? An old team leader and I were in the middle of the break room discussing sales versus leadership. We were discussing it with louder and louder and much louder results. I was saying nothing happens until a sale is made and there is nothing a sale will not fix. The team leader was maintaining that everything hinged on leadership. Our boss, Bryan Stasch, got between us and said we needed to stop it because we were both saying the same thing. Most of us are at least decent sales people, but we never use our sales skills on our employees.

Sales or Leadership?

The world that we live in has changed a great deal in the last 20 years; our employees used to want to show up and do a good job for the most part. How many of us still find that to be the case? Now we have to think of our employees as internal customers. We need to write the help wanted ad so they know what is in it for them first.

Just as when we want an external customer to come through our doors, we would write the help wanted ad to make the phone ring from a prospective employee. Once the phone rings or they send us the resume, then we need to sell them on coming in for the interview. During the interview we need to sell them on going to work for us and actually showing up to work. Then we need to sell them on



showing up on time and doing a good job while there. We even need to sell them on staying at work with us.

It is hard to find good employees for the most part, so when we get one we tend to be a little fearful of them leaving us. We don't hold them accountable and since they tend to act like prima donnas, the tail starts wagging the dog. We start to lose control of the situation and they get a boatload harder to sell.

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“CAN YOU BRIEFLY DEFINE GREAT LEADERSHIP? IT IS A PERSON WITH ABOVE AVERAGE ETHICS AND VISION WHO CAN MOTIVATE FOLLOWERS TO FOLLOW WITHOUT MICRO-MANAGING THEM.”

CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK [CEO OF THE AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING INSTITUTE]

The Moment of Truth

This is the defining moment of the employer/employee relationship. How you handle this will decide your leadership/selling style and the relationship you will have with your employees.

We put how we feel about working ourselves and feeling like we should not have to be a babysitter at the forefront of our relationship with our employee. We feel that they should be grateful to have a job. The real deal is that our employees as a group will sink down to whatever level we allow them to and only have moments of greatness or even adequateness. We walk around and see a ton of things of which the employee is taking advantage of us, and instead of stopping and holding them accountable, we let

it slide. We see the work area dirty, the productivity down, the phone not being answered properly and it makes us feel resentful. It feels easier to get busy ourselves than to have the conversation with our employees. Some of my clients hide in their office, some work on cars because that is their comfort zone. Some grow fat (not in a good way), and the stress ends up taking years off their life.

Are You the Problem?

Each time we turn away from an employee doing something subpar we reinforce their behavior. If I had a dime for each time I have heard that all we are doing is giving them rope. Why are we giving them rope? You realize that by giving them rope, we are the one responsible for them hanging themselves.

I maintain that by being a hard-liner, I am by far way more compassionate than a supposed nice person that is giving the employee rope. We are so busy trying to survive the day that we can't see a way out. You cannot do it all by yourself; you are being made to feel way more uncomfortable than the employee is in your respective roles.

“By allowing and tolerating the subpar behaviors around you, you reinforce them and are making the statement that they are OK.”

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The image of the employee standing on a wobbly three-legged stool with a noose around their neck while I stood in front of them loading my gun to fire them is what allowed me to look at the employee and start holding them accountable. Which comes first? You finally losing it after the straw that broke the camel's back and you pull the trigger when your top blows? Or did the employee finally see that you can't stand to look at them anymore, and you kick the stool out from under them before you can shoot them?

You Are Responsible for Their Success

It cannot be stressed enough that you are the boss and it is your responsibility to create an environment for your employees to be successful in. It is their responsibility to be successful. There can be a myriad of reasons why the person you hired is not the person who is now showing up to work. Their significant other might have cheated on them, they might be going through family medical problems or they just overspent, to name a few. Now they walk in the victim, and their job performance slipped. You chose not to address the performance slip and they slip some more.

You, being a nice boss, of course take it. You let the performance slip and start feeling resentful and of course a rope magically appears in your hand. You still do nothing to correct the situation so it gets worse. You might even have had enough on a couple of occasions and yelled and did a little rain dance on them. Then they got better for a couple of days and then went right back to subpar behavior and you did nothing. You just lost. That was the exact moment you could have held them accountable and sold them on being a true member of your team, and that in my opinion would have made you truly compassionate.

Are you not hanging yourself when you hang an employee? Have you not been giving yourself rope as you give it to them? This is like committing suicide with all the stress that leads up to it affecting all the people around you as well. By allowing and tolerating the subpar behaviors around you, you reinforce them and are making the statement that they are OK. Stop being nice and quit allowing/tolerating the very things that cause you resentment to begin with. You can create an environment where the path of least resentment is getting the job done right and the employee feels great about their performance. This becomes your culture.

Another way of looking at it would be that as a shop owner you are a masochist.

If you would like some help on this subject, for a limited time you can listen to an ATI teleseminar called "The Secrets to Creating Effective Employees." Go to www.ationlinetrain.com/2015-05. 



**CHRIS
"CHUBBY"
FREDERICK
CONTRIBUTOR**

Chris "Chubby" Frederick is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 108 associates train and coach more than 1,250 shop owners every week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. Our associates love helping shop owners who are having the same struggle as many of them have had, and who are looking for the same answers – and in some cases looking for a lifeline. This month's article was written with the help of ATI Coach Brian Hunnicut.

 E-mail Chubby at cfrederick@autotraining.net

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