

"Assume that the person you are listening to might know something you don't."

» Jordan Peterson



...Let Me Sum Up

Someone shared a meme with me recently that used one of my favorite scenes from The Princess Bride.

During that scene, Inigo Montoya (Mandie Patenkin) begins to describe everything that has transpired while Westley (Cary Elwes) was incapacitated.

He begins, (in his great accent), "Let me explain," but then pauses and says, "No...there is too much...let me sum up."

While I'm sure the writers were going for a laugh, I always admired the management choice of Inigo.

When time was of the essence, Inigo knew to prioritize what he shared.

Our modern brains are constantly bombarded with information — some of it pertinent, much of it not.

When I was in college in the late Mesozoic Era, I remember having debates with friends who panicked when a professor said we were responsible for knowing everything in the textbook.

I argued that even the professors didn't know everything in those textbooks.

If you "focused" on everything, you'd not be focused enough on the stuff most likely to be on the exams.

For the most part, professors shared their priorities in class. So, pay attention to what they say...and/or borrow the notes of someone who didn't skip classes. (Hey, no judgement here.)



Same As It Ever Was

Aside talk of hiring challenges, the subjects I've heard most about from managers in recent times revolve around employee engagement.

Some have suggested that it was easier to manage when people actually "wanted to work." Oh, this new generation!

I have joked about the multitude of people – young and old – that I've witnessed on jobs over the years who didn't exactly seem like they "wanted to work." So...maybe that's not a brand-new issue.

One of the things I regularly suggest to experienced managers is that they may be misremembering (just a little) how engaged they were early in their careers.

We tend to remember working hard and valuing our jobs.

No doubt, that's true. But how often in our pasts have we questioned why in the world we were staying with a job? Almost all can usually share (often funny) stories about that.

Many of the engagement challenges we face are not new. It's a good bet our managers wondered about us from time to time as well.

So, maybe we shouldn't throw our hands up just yet.

It's easier for folks with a few miles on their career paths to look back and see how various jobs and experiences – both good and bad – led them to where they are now.

While our industry is always evolving, recent periods have been especially disruptive.

Between digital proliferation, pandemic shutdowns, and tight labor markets, our teams have had to adapt, adjust, and often take on new roles.

In many cases, however, the list of things we ask our teams to do, measure, monitor, and report on haven't kept up with the changes.

Their "To Do" lists tend to expand without being wisely edited or prioritized.

While time management is always an important aspect of running a business, today's hiring and staffing challenges make it even more so.

Leaders should continually be looking for ways to remove unnecessary impediments for their teams.

That's not as easy as it sounds.

There is a tendency for people to be more interested in defending past decisions and existing policies than in evaluating whether they are still relevant.

Even the most talented teams have a finite amount of time, energy, and attention to give each day.

Are you helping yours get the most of theirs?

Some of our tougher struggles often produced our biggest successes and greatest lessons. But we didn't always see that at the time.

Many career paths only make sense looking back. Most new employees have just started down their paths.

They can be pardoned if they don't seem to know, (or care?) where they're heading yet.

Don't expect folks to be as committed as you might be for the long haul just yet.

Strive to give them reasons to want to be on your team right now.

Keep communications open. It's amazing what we learn when you let folks tell their stories.

As beneficial, personal conversations help people feel noticed and valued. People want to be where they are noticed and valued.

Acknowledge what they are doing well, and commit to helping them develop where needed.

Strive to create and defend a culture of respect, fairness, good humor, and professionalism.

Those are the kind of cultures good people want to be a part of.

They're also the kind that folks feel comfortable recruiting others to join.

Work hard to create and support that kind of culture.

"Spend a little more time trying to make something of yourself and a little less time trying to impress people."

» The Breakfast Club

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