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"Failure is success in progress."

» Albert Einstein



Information Vacuums

Over the course of only a few days, three managers from three different banks made similar statements to me.

Each expressed some version of, "I don't recognize this place anymore." One stated that she was considering leaving her company.

I was honestly surprised. This person has been a consistent top performer in her organization and from what I can see is highly valued by her employer.

With a little prodding, I learned that my friend is losing confidence in the leadership of their company.

She spoke of questionable decisions being made with little forewarning or explanations.

I've known this person long enough to know she's not a whiner. She's legitimately concerned.

The fact that two other folks from two different banks also expressed that they didn't "recognize" their companies anymore made me curious as to why.

To my knowledge, none of the three have new supervisors. None have changed jobs recently.



Take a Step Back

At some point on July 4th, I did something to my lower back that it really didn't appreciate.

It didn't let me know that until the next morning.

It's one of the things about middle age that still surprises me from time to time. There is something perplexing about discovering you're injured and having no idea as to the reason why.

I often joke with my sons that if there were a bruise on my body when I was their age, I could tell you how it happened.

It usually came with an entertaining story, to boot. Today...not so much.

Thankfully, back issues are not common for me. When they do occur, however, I am reminded of something a co-worker told me years ago.

She was a person who showed a level of patience and empathy with ornery customers that was truly impressive.

After watching her diffuse one particularly antagonizing customer, I complimented her customer service bomb-diffusing abilities.

She explained that her father had chronic back problems, and it really wore him down.

Thinking just a bit more about those conversations, I noticed that each person expressed frustration with the morale and culture of their banks during recent times.

One stated, "I don't know why we are doing some of the things we're doing."

Going over that in my mind later, I thought, "Well, someone does. They're just not doing a very good job of sufficiently explaining it."

If ever there were a time in which our companies might "feel different", it's now.

The list of changed policies, procedures, schedules, and job duties in most banks is long.

People are finding certain things that were supposed to be short-lived are in place longer than they expected. Too often, that's not being acknowledged or explained.

They begin feeling cut off.

Information vacuums are being created and those vacuums suck morale out of organizations.

Leaders today are busier than ever and are being pulled in many directions. Many routine communication practices have been modified or eliminated.

It's understandable. But it's not healthy.

Whether in person, phone, online meeting, email, text, or carrier pigeon (where licensed), do all you can to keep your teams in the loop.

It's okay if you don't have all the answers. But, acknowledge that you respect they have questions.

As we write new chapters in this interesting year, strive to make sure you and your team remain on the same page.

He was a nice guy, but often irritable and impatient when his back was acting up.

She said that when she was dealing with a tough customer, she just told herself... well...maybe they're not feeling well.

Maybe they have something bothering them physically. Maybe they have some family who are not doing well.

They may have an understandable reason for being less-than-agreeable to deal with.

She joked that even if a person was being mean for no reason, it's easier to be nice to them if you invent a reason in your head to forgive them.

I still smile thinking about that line.

I spent most of the week in varying levels of pain and constantly trying to find a position that offered relief.

I caught myself on more than one occasion losing patience and getting a little short with a few folks who may not have deserved it.

Each time I caught myself doing that, I thought about my old friend's words.

Sometimes we're the person giving grace.

Sometimes we're the person needing it.

Many people we interact with these days are dealing with challenges we are not aware of.

Keep that in mind when interacting with folks.

There's also a better-than-average chance you may have things going on that are impacting your mood and demeanor, as well.

Try to be graceful as you go.

**"Look for a way to lift someone up.
And if that's all you do, that's enough."**

>> Elizabeth Lesser

Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

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