

"We often refuse to accept an idea merely because the tone of voice in which it has been expressed is unsympathetic to us." »
Friedrich Nietzsche

New Name for an Old Issue

I had to chuckle recently as several people sent me a link to the same news story on the same day. One person teased that I was ahead of my time because I had joked about the story's topic for years.

The column was about the recently coined phrase "Quietly Quitting." In it, the author talks about the "growing phenomenon" among millennials.

The article discusses the notion among many millennials that they are not going to burn themselves out.

They're not going to work longer hours than absolutely required and are putting personal priorities ahead of career concerns.

One of the folks who shared the column referenced how I frequently joked with managers about employees who have quit...but haven't gotten around to telling you yet.

They show up and do the absolute minimum to get the next paycheck.

They are often the least-stressed people at work because they really don't care if you or their team is annoyed with them. They're not worried about incentives or team morale or career advancement.

They're already looking for another job...or plan on doing so as soon as you let them go...which many can't believe you haven't done yet.

Managers always laugh and groan as I joke about that situation.

The Message in the Tone

An email interaction with a sales rep has me reflecting on advice I gave my sons many years ago.

I remember talking to them about being conscious of the tone they set in their communications.

I knew my younger son really didn't intend to sound as he often did when communicating.

He was short and to the point and didn't bother with any "extra" words when answering a question.

I suppose from the time much of the world's conversations and communications moved to text messaging, many folks' interactions became rather terse.

People still laugh at old guys (like me) who tend to use complete sentences in text messages.

To my defense, we're not on flip phones anymore and having to hit the same key three times to type a letter.

I'm also known to use punctuation and even break up long texts into paragraphs...which I understand is also a prehistoric tendency.

Come to think of it, I may double space between those sentences. Forty years of typing habits are hard to break.

The point I semi-successfully made to them back then was that people hear and read things differently when you take the extra few seconds to show politeness or appreciation.

Getting a few chuckles, however, is not meant to suggest it's a trivial matter.

On the contrary, I try to use humor to bring attention to a serious issue.

Disengaged employees are one of the greatest threats to business success.

Business plans and strategies are only as effective as the skillsets and engagement levels of a business's employees.

Some tend to train people to acceptable levels of job competence, but then fail to foster engagement adequately...and continually.

Work environments are not static, and during challenging times, can be rather fluid.

A trait of effective leaders is paying constant attention to team morale and cohesiveness. Moods and attitudes tend to distinguish work environments.

With that, one of the truest ways to both monitor and sustain engagement is frequent and positive communication.

I continue to remind leaders that it's usually not hard work or even stressful times that burn out good people.

Lack of communication or feeling ignored, however, almost always does.

Don't fall quiet when it comes to reminding your team of their importance to you.

You can't include things like "Thank You" or "I appreciate it," too many times when speaking, emailing, or texting.

The recent interaction with that sales rep began via an online form on their website. I had questions about his company's advertising rates.

His email response informed me that I had not provided my phone number. It read more like something an annoyed boss would send to an employee who hadn't completed a task satisfactorily.

He apparently wasn't going to answer my basic questions until I gave my phone number. I likely would have given it to him had it felt like he was politely asking instead of correcting me.

Was his email blatantly rude? Not really.

Did it make me more interested in what his company offered? Not at all.

I did not respond. One week later, there has been no follow-up, and I've moved on.

Along with paying compliments, communicating in respectful and grateful tones is a type of sales and service superpower.

It's even more impactful during challenging and stressful times.

What you say matters. The tone you convey (spoken and/or written) often matters more.

"Do the best you can. No one can do more than that."

» John Wooden

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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