



Instilling Hope @ Work

By Mark D. Sauter, author, *Bringing Meaning into Monday: A Sustainable Approach to Bottom Line Success*

Viktor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, described the hardships he personally endured within World War II concentration camps. Even though his physical conditions were inhumane and horrendous, they were not what Mr. Frankl found the most torturous. He felt the greater issue, beyond the physical extremes, was the loss of self-worth and the impact it had on the inner-person. He argued, "Man's main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see meaning in his life." He contends that by giving people a sense of hope in the future – a purpose for living – it better equips them to deal in the present. By reframing a person's attitude toward difficult circumstances, they can grow from them versus succumbing to them.

Although physical pain, starvation and death are typically not used to describe conditions found in today's workplace, the loss of self-identity or increased apathy is. Realizing this, Mr. Frankl's solution also has relevance to work. To be fully engaged, people require hope, a sense of purpose. This will result in greater satisfaction instead of divisions and conflicts caused when individuals lose sight of the wider issues.

Hope is not about ease or a result of having answers. Instead, hope results from participation that revolves around the notion of possibility: the possibility of positive change, the possibility of a greater sense of belonging, the possibility of having a say, the possibility of a better future.

Many people spend a majority of their time at work; therefore their jobs significantly influence their overall health, energy and well-being, in *and* outside of work. In many cases, this influence is a result of the relationships and attitudes that are conditioned at work, not necessarily the work they do or the time they spend doing it.

2500 years ago, Confucius believed, if you want to create sustainable social improvement, it must occur where people spend the majority of their time. He was right.

Success in today's world

Today, all types of organizations are faced with stagnate growth, declining profit margins, new forms of competition, demanding customers, internal turf wars, and

an increasingly discontent workforce. As if this is not challenging enough, in order to capitalize on tomorrow's opportunities, organizations must establish collaborative networks in order to deal with the realities of today's high-risk, high-speed society. This challenges historic mindsets and local interests by welcoming diverse, even opposing perspectives.

Therefore, to succeed both in terms of performance and people, individuals must be equipped to deal with variation, and leaders must be skilled at instilling hope by establishing a unifying sense of purpose. This shared sense of purpose will build trust and accountability, streamline operations, and better tap into workforce talent. People will have a greater degree of participation and sense of belonging. They'll more clearly understand how they, personally and collectively, contribute value to others – in and outside the organization. In this way, people will focus on possibilities not problems; they will have a greater sense of hope. As a result, people will be more resilient, better able to cope with everyday life, and their work will be more vibrant, productive and meaningful.

Interestingly, this renewed sense of hope reflects the origins of capitalism. ¹Adam Smith, the originator of contemporary capitalism, in 1776, showed how it was possible to pursue wealth in ways that would further not just the interests of the individual but those of society as a whole. Society's interests are met by producing things that people value, which reflects the essence of work.

Bringing Meaning into Monday provides a repeatable process that helps organizations instill hope; improving individual effectiveness and participation, and helping good leaders become BEST leaders. Work is about producing *value* - matching talents, resources and services to the needs of others. And sustainable success is a result of doing this in a *unified* and *balanced* manner.

¹ *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), refer to the "invisible hand" of capitalism.

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