



Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 110

CREATING THE EXCEPTIONAL WORKPLACE -- BUILDING A "**STRENGTH-BASED**" ORGANIZATION (PART 4)

People Join **Companies**, but Leave **Supervisors**

Managers (Supervisors) Trump Companies

Sharon F, a graduate of Stanford and Harvard, wanted to get into the world of publishing, so she joined one of the media/entertainment giants in the marketing department of one of their many magazines. She was responsible for devising loyalty programs to ensure that subscription holders would renew. She loved the work, excelled at it, and caught the eye of senior management. Sharon is a very small cog in this giant machine, but according to the chairman of this giant, employees like her--bright, talented, ambitious employees--are "the fuel for our future."

Unfortunately for this giant, the fuel is leaking. After only a year, Sharon left the company. She joined a restaurant start-up as head of marketing and business development. Her boss, it appears, drove her away.

"He's not a bad man," she admits. "He's just not a manager. He's insecure, and I don't think you can be insecure and a good manager. It makes him compete with his own people. It makes him boast about his high-style living, when he should be listening to us. And he plays these silly little power games to show us who's the boss. Like last week, he didn't show up for a 10 a.m. interview with a candidate who had made a two hour commute just to see him, because he had stayed out much too late the night before. He called me at 9.55 a.m., asked me to break the news to her, and tried to make it seem like he was giving me some kind of compliment, that he could really trust me to cover for him. I can't stand behavior like that."

Listening to Sharon, you might wonder if it is just a personality clash, or even whether it is she who is somehow causing the problems. So you ask her, "Does anyone else on the team feel the same way?"

"I'm not sure," she confesses. "I don't like to bad-mouth my boss, so I haven't really talked about it with anyone at work. But I do know this: when I came here there were thirteen of us on his team. Now, a year later, every single one of them has left, except me."

Sharon's company does many things very well, both in terms of its overall business performance and its

employee-friendly culture. But, deep within this giant, unseen by the senior executives or Wall Street, one individual is draining the company of power and value. As Sharon says, he is not a bad man, but he is a bad manager. Woefully miscast, he now spends his days chasing away one talented employee after another.

Perhaps he is a rare exception. Or perhaps the giant makes a habit of promoting people into manager roles who are talented individual achievers, but poor managers. The giant would certainly hope for the former. But Sharon doesn't care one way or the other. When Sharon told her company that she was considering leaving, they offered her more money and a bigger title, to try and coax her back. But they didn't offer her what she wanted the most: a new manager. So she left.

An employee may join Disney or G.E. or Time Warner because she is lured by their generous benefits package and their reputation for valuing employees. But it is her relationship with her immediate manager that will determine how long she stays and how productive she is while she is there. Michael Eisner, Jack Welch, Gerald Levin, and all the goodwill in the world can only do so much. In the end, these questions tell us that, from the employee's perspective, managers trump companies.

Next: Managers (Supervisors) Are Not Just Leaders-In-Waiting.

Regards, FL Ames

For more information about the research and book 'First Break All the Rules' please refer to web site <http://www.gallup.com/poll/managing/grtwrkplc.asp>

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