

Is Your Team Still With You?

A force reduction, wage cut, benefits change, or a (multiple) reorganization can each having significant negative impact on your team's mental state. Having gone through late 2008, and 2009, your team has likely experienced *more* than one of these major work life changing events. So, it's probably a fair question to ask.



Better yet, the question to ask is *will they be, tomorrow?*

Why should they still be with you tomorrow? A common response, more of a retort actually, might be *for the money*. But money, no matter how you slice it, is more often than not a negative in the overall equation. Pay too much, it's a problem. Pay too little, it's a problem. No one wants to feel taken advantage of. As long as they feel paid appropriately (which includes benefits), it's a non-issue.

So what then *are* the issues? They come down to leadership, purpose, and security. While it's important all three are addressed, at a minimum any two of the three *must* be.

Security

Security, perhaps synonymous with 'confidence,' comes from clear communication, expectation setting, and stability. Each of us as an individual needs to feel they are secure in their position, before they can productively focus on other tasks. If you don't know whether

you're part of the layoffs to be announced at noon on Tuesday, odds are Tuesday morning you're not going to be very effective getting anything done. It's just human nature.

Maintaining the team's sense of security requires clear communication that sets expectations. The more turbulent the times, the more frequent communication is required. People form their own opinions based on the frequency, type, and transparency of the information being provided to them. Information that appears filtered, sparse, or lacks a sense of empathy will *be* received as such. Worse than not sustaining a sense of security, such communication may erode it. Questions of *what are they hiding? what don't they want me to know? don't they even care?* begin brewing.

Better to be open, as transparent as possible, and frequent when communicating. But, here's a little secret: Start doing it *before* it becomes necessary.

While it's never too late to start, sooner *is* always better than later.

Purpose

Purpose is the sense of knowing *why I'm here*. Purpose is often an intangible entity...you know it when you see it. It is a purely emotional, mindful realization that you are participating in something bigger than yourself.

In some organizations, a sense of purpose is almost manifested in the organization's charter. Consider an organization like ***Caring Technologies***. This organization came into being in order to fill a specific need. What is their purpose? To serve the autistic community. It is *clear* to each team member who the target customer is and the potential value they can contribute.

In a manner of speaking, purpose may be seen as having 'arrived,' albeit temporarily. Many organizations are not so fortunate as to have a clear edict for its existence, for the individual's need to contribute. Consider if you work for a behemoth, like UPS or Amazon? Or, the small grocer in mid-town?

Purpose may not readily be apparent for team members. What's your purpose at UPS? To ship a brown box? At Amazon, to analyze supply routing tables with a g'zillion inputs? Or, to make sure there's enough milk in the chiller at the grocer? None of these feel inspiring.

Leadership

In these cases Leadership is important. The leader(s) in an organization need to set and *state* the organizations direction and reason for existence. Team members trust their leaders to *take them someplace*. As long as the faith is not violated, the team will often elect to go along for the ride, to stay with the leader.

The topic of leadership is explored further in this blog in other posts like, ***The Leadership Fit***, and, ***Are CEOs Like the Supreme Leader?***

Without purpose, without leadership driving the organization toward a goal (a manufactured purpose, perhaps), the reason to stay in place does not endure.

Our current economic state gives leaders a chance to shine. If your company is passing through dire straits, security may not exist, but if you can demonstrate empathy for the team's situation, show them where you're going and why, they're more likely to grab an oar or row harder than you might have thought.

As I discussed earlier, my experience has shown that having two of the three, Security, Purpose, and Leadership, is a must if your team is to stay with you.

Ask *yourself*, using one variation as an example, even in unsecure times, does having faith in your leadership, or an understanding of your purpose for being there (beyond getting a check), support your desire to stay with the team? Or, do you think I'm all wet?