

"Caught in the Devils Bargain" - by Anne Howard (Apologies, Joni Mitchell and Woodstock)

Last time I talked about Bad Bosses. They are just one side of the story. Here are some examples from the other side.

"My staff seem to think they are doing us a great big favor just by showing up, they don't seem to realize they are here to work, not to socialize and surf the net."

"My staff seems to think I am an idiot. They tell me the most ridiculous and outrageous things. If I attempt to call them on it, they become abusive. Recently, I had a staff member tell me he had to have a week off to go to his mother's funeral. On his return I asked him how he was doing. He said he was fine and his mother was recovering nicely. When I said I understood he was off for his mother's funeral, he started yelling at me and told me I was inconsiderate. Another manager had overheard the initial conversation regarding his mother having died and when I asked her if he had indeed said his mother had died, she said I had heard him correctly."

"I provide every new staff member with a job description, a copy of our performance evaluation, go through the job, map out a training program, provide on-the-job training and ongoing support, set expectations and follow up meetings based on the job and, I follow up with people and still I have staff who say they don't know what is expected of them. I simply don't know what else I can do to get people to take responsibility for their jobs."

"I recently had a staff member tell me that she needed to have her job changed because there was too much work for her to do. While discussing the job tasks and work load she explained that the reason she couldn't get her work done was because of the time she needed to spend on phone talking to her family and friends every day."

"A staff member told me the other day that I had better be nice to him and give him two extra days off or he would quit and get all his friends to quit too."

And the two biggest complaints of all:

- staff members who are obnoxious, inconsiderate and just plain mean to their co-workers and disrespectful to their bosses
- staff members who do as little as possible every day.

While I am tempted to wander into a discussion on the systemic organizational problems that might be at the root of these complaints, this time I will limit myself to providing a short list of characteristics of great employees. In my summer newsletter I will pursue the discussion about creating workplaces where people (employees and their bosses) do not feel "caught in the devil's bargain".

Great Employees:

- Understand that the employment relationship is a contract for an exchange of effort for reward and they provide a fair exchange of their effort (knowledge, skills and abilities) every day they are at work, for the whole day.
- Do their best work, not just what it takes to get by
- Are polite and respectful to their co-workers, bosses and customers whether or not they like them.
- Help others whenever they have the chance
- Look for ways to improve the things that aren't perfect rather than just complaining about them
- Say they are sorry when they mess up (and mean it)
- Look for ways to improve their own knowledge, skill and abilities every day so that if the time comes when this job doesn't fit well anymore they will have the confidence and abilities to go to a new and better fitting job.

If you are an employee (and most bosses are also employees) Robert Fulghum's, All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten provides sage advice " Play fair. . . .Clean up your own mess. . . . Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody".

