**Is The Good Will Gone?**

***Blog post by Karen Warren - KW Inner Strength***

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I write a weekly blog and recently my thoughts have turned to how at work and sometimes in life generally we can be too busy to listen to what people are saying to us. That might be because we don’t rate the person or our experience is that what they’re saying has little value but if you’re paid to line manage that person, you should listen to them shouldn’t you?

There are lots of different contexts for conversations of course, some might just be a general ‘hello, how are you?’ in the office but others might be team, one to one progress or performance review meetings. If you’re not having those meetings, how will you know what’s going on with your staff member? Because what’s going on with them might be affecting their performance and level of engagement at work. Even your safest pair of hands in the workplace needs a conversation with you sometimes. You risk them moving on if you don’t make that happen.

I have a theory, one I’m very interested to hear your views on, that workplaces have become too busy and pressurised for us to listen to each other actively, to be present when someone is telling us that they’re struggling. Team meetings, one to ones and performance reviews are being scheduled less and less and so we are not setting clear direction and expectations for people, let alone reviewing their performance and giving people time to answer that question, ‘how are you?’.

We all have ‘stuff’ in our lives, things we need to deal with, whether that be around additional responsibilities, health issues or difficulties at home for instance and reasonable adjustments are exactly that, reasonable. But I think we’ve become fearful of asking people how they are in case they need some time to speak about things or require some form of additional support, albeit temporarily. If we don’t ask the question we may think those problems don’t exist, that they’ll magically get sorted and the member of staff will re-engage in their work as if nothing ever happened and if you’re very lucky that’ll be the case. But the reality is more likely to be that the member of staff will resume their work but they will dis-engage to some extent because they got through a difficult time without any support from their Line Manager or Employer, who has a duty of care towards them.

Saying you’re too busy doesn’t cut it. If you have responsibility for staff you need to find a way to talk to them, either collectively in a team meeting or in one to one meetings. And please don’t only have a team meeting when you have something to say. If you value their opinions, make time available to hear their voices. If you don’t you send a pretty strong message as to what you feel about them.

Dis-engagement can look like a hundred different things. It might be someone taking lots of personal calls during work time, taking longer breaks than are usually permitted, spending too much time chatting and not focusing on their work, calling in sick more often, not meeting deadlines and starting to demonstrate a bad attitude. Those are all signs that someone is not loving what they’re doing and that might be because they didn’t feel supported during a difficult time. That person might leave, or worse they stay, doing a very much less than brilliant job and inflict their negativity on the rest of your workforce. Then you’re stuck and it’s unlikely that you’ll be able to retrieve that situation quickly.

I think the good will of the workplace has gone because we’ve stopped listening to each other and demonstrating a duty of care for the people we employ. People are less likely to go the extra mile if they’re not receiving good care in return. That’s reciprocity – you do something for me and then I’m much more likely to do something for you in return. If you employ or manage people you need to look after them. It’s not enough just to pay them I’m afraid. If you don’t look after them, they might still stay but the stability of your organisation could well suffer as people become less reliable and look for other roles. At worst, you have a large chunk of your workforce who aren’t looking to move on but don’t want to be there either. That can make the foundations of your organisation very unstable and your contingency planning at that point needs to be tip top. It’s just easier to look after people in the first place isn’t it?

I appreciate that mine is just a view and would very much like to hear your thoughts on this issue. I’d love someone to tell me I’m totally wrong! Please email me at kw.innerstrength@outlook.com if you would like to comment on this article.