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Dealing with Being “Dumped”

Whether you are dumped by an organization, boss, friend, or lover, it’s an understatement to say that it is a downer. In fact, you are generally pretty hurt and angry. How do you deal with this?

Recognize the reality on two levels. On one level, the old cliché is right: adversity does make us strong. Many people find that the bad experience of being dumped eventually makes them better, stronger, happier. So you may feel rejected and dejected, but in the long run what you learn from the experience is quite positive. Thank goodness for this balance in nature!

On another level, do not assume that your hurt or anger over being dumped will completely disappear. You may always retain traces of hurt and anger. Accept these feelings; indeed, embrace them as inherently justified. Allow the “dump” to blossom into something better and accept the pain as an old friend, and eventually the pain will subside.

Don’t Ignore Survivors of Downsizing

All too often, so much attention is paid to those being let go that the special needs of layoff “survivors” are ignored, according to Warner B. Wims, Ph.D., President, WBW & Associates.

Those needs must be acknowledged and managed. Many survivors find themselves feeling anxious about their futures and less trustful of the organization, which leads to low energy and low motivation to excel.

For others, the calm following an organizational downsizing is a time for serious reflection about life choices. How should managers deal with these situations?

- Seek opportunities to ask survivors how they are doing.
- Make sure they hear your interpretation of recent events directly from you. Even if there is good central communication, survivors will feel a heightened thirst for accurate information from their immediate superior.
- Re-state the business case that led to downsizing, and also details about the business case that will ensure a profitable future.
- Communicate that the organization cares about them. Share your feelings and acknowledge theirs. Many argue that emotional needs supercede the need for business information during the post-downsizing period.
- Be conscious of your own stress level and how you’re coping, as well as how you’re influencing others. Stress sneaks up on us and our brain may be the last to know that the body is under stress.
- Don’t make promises that are beyond your control, e.g., “this will be the end of the downsizing.”
- Finally, as simple as it sounds, ask people how you can help. Managers report to us that they get surprising answers to this question. At one Silicon Valley company, survivors asked their manager to stop pretending that everything was “hunky dory” in a veiled attempt to make them feel better. At a New Jersey telecommunications company, survivors requested sanctioned time to gather and share their feelings. Employees at a financial institution in New York requested a party. Rather than assume you know what will help, it’s best to ask.

Coaching Tip: Coach to Attainment

When coaching others, be sure to help them see *how* they can attain the goals they set for themselves. Don’t assume that the person you are coaching clearly understands the steps toward success.

Teamwork at Kaiser: Key Lessons for Success

The Hawaii Region of Kaiser Permanente, the nation's largest health maintenance organization, has made extraordinary gains in developing teamwork. They find that this has helped them improve the quality of health care they provide, as well as boost employee satisfaction, achieve strong membership growth, and improve overall financial results.

A primary example of Kaiser's nationally recognized teamwork approach is their Health Care Teams. These are made up of physicians, RNs, other specialists, and services that provide care to patients.

The teams have:

- improved clinic processes and patient flow to reduce waste and redundancy toward an improved care experience
- optimized the skills of each team member
- implemented a patient database for chronic illness which allows the team to focus immediately on patient needs
- developed innovative approaches to care.

The Hawaii Region teamwork approach includes multidisciplinary teams throughout the region, in such diverse organizational areas as the information technology division, food services division, facilities design and construction, and accounts payable.

What can other organizations learn from Kaiser? What best practices has Kaiser employed that put real power behind teamwork?

- They place a strong emphasis on the value of people.

As Vice President of Human Resources Kaki Jennings points out, "We don't just like our people; we love them! We're like *ohana*, a family ('*ohana*' is the Hawaiian word for family that implies love, loyalty, bonding, concern and support), and have a strong culture of caring about members ('customers')."

- They provide opportunities for people to contribute, and they create a work environment where people can make a difference. Every staff member is on a team. The teams have authority to make decisions, commit resources, and manage the output of their work consistent with overall goals and objectives. Bruce Behnke, Hawaii Region President and Manager, points out that top management doesn't criticize. Instead, it gives people tools and sets overall direction, then lets the teams work together in a way that makes the final decision "their" decision. "Sometimes our people end up making harder decisions than we would have made—decisions that we would not have believed employees would have accepted—but because they grapple with the information and come to conclusions themselves, they buy into it," he says.
- They leverage people's natural desire to be on a winning team by reinforcing the importance of high quality, resulting in a strong sense of pride.

Behnke points out that the development of these highly effective teams does not happen overnight. It requires persistence, and it has taken Kaiser about two years to achieve its current success. However, given the overwhelmingly positive results, this kind of teamwork approach is well worth it!

Coaching Tip: Coach to *Their* Experience

When coaching others, don't impose your own life lessons. Rather, help the person gain lessons from their own experiences. Remember that although the lessons you learned from your own life experience may be helpful, as a coach, the lessons you help others learn come from *their* own experience and are even more powerful.

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