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Simplicity

By Paperitalo Staff

My stepson and I were having a discussion the other day (he is a junior in high school) that went something like this (his comment): "I don't understand what people do in offices all day, it just seems so stupid." His sister chimed in affirming this viewpoint. Your writer, seldom lost for words, was.

For some reason, I have recently been subjected to many new management theories. I don't want to sound old fashioned or repetitive in this column, but it seems to me that once in a while, we have to go back to basics.

First of all, if your business is in trouble, a new management theory is not likely to fix it, at least not in the time left to save your business from disaster. Sure, serendipitous miracles do occasionally occur and are chronicled with great fanfare, but if one digs beneath the surface, they will find that the miraculous business salvations attributable to such experiences are about as rare as lightning strikes or shark bites.

So, back to the basics. No one has yet invented a management system better than the management system used by military forces and perfected over the last four millennia. Why? Because there is no more difficult job than sending soldiers into battle where they may be maimed or killed. If you can accomplish that-convincing your team to possibly give up their life for your cause-you have accomplished quite a feat. Military management systems know how to do this.

Then, as I often say, everyone's job must be to spin the invoice printer. If the amount coming in does not exceed the amount going out, one will not exist for long. If an employee does not understand this and understand their personal importance in contributing to it, you have a problem. If they and their ilk are not separated from the organization promptly, all you have to wait for is the competitor who has a fully engaged management and workforce who understand the importance of the invoice printer to bury you.

A number of years ago, there was a large company in our industry, a darling of Wall Street, whose whispered internal mantra was that the workforce was going to rise up and save the company. This never happened. The company floundered because there was no firm command and control philosophy at the top. The company tried a merger and then was sold. The logo of that company has just about disappeared.

So back to my stepson's question-how much of what you do each day is worth doing? How much of it is a fad? How much spins the invoice printer? Why do you do the things you do? If you don't contribute to the success of your employer, who will? Can you remember if any of the efforts you exerted as recently as, say, this past September, were of lasting value? Do you even remember what you did in September?

I think many management fads are promulgated by individuals and institutions trying to find something new to sell. They have to come up with a new theory every few years or so in order to have their own sustainable business. The trouble comes when you or your business blindly swallows what they sell-their sustainability contributes to your own lack of same. Be innovative, but be careful and do not lose site of the basics.

For safety this week, I would ask you when was the last time you reviewed and retrained on your CPR expertise? If it has been over one year, it is time for a refresher.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##