

THE CHANGING ROLE OF BUSINESS IN MAKING SENSE OF WHY WE ARE HERE

If Covid has had one major global benefit, I suggest it is highlighting the world of making money isn't of itself the driving force behind finding purpose in our lives, or why we are here. We read and hear a lot about demands for better workplace culture, mental wellbeing support, quality family time, professional development and work flexibility, (including working from home or office). These and related current issues such as "the Great Resignation", indicate an increasing desire for an improved quality of life. Life-work balance instead of work-life balance - putting life and personal goals first and work as one means to that end.

Covid-19 brought these issues to a head, partly because of the dramatic impact on every aspect of personal and business life. But also because it gave all of us plenty of time to stop and think about ourselves and what is truly important in our lives. Are we at last addressing the need to put the 'human' back into human resources in business? That increasingly seems to be the case in respect of the workers. The jury is still out on whether it applies to business owners, chief executives and shareholders.

Long before Covid's arrival, multiple research findings showed some three quarters of working people were not engaged in their work. Simply they either didn't like their job or they didn't like the way they were being treated. Research was showing the latter as being the main reason people left. The slogan 'we are all in it together' applied as much to business leaders and owners themselves.

This may be part of the reason that business leaders are beginning to recognize what they have always known but too often ignored. That the organisation really does run on the skills, passions, talents, resources – and personal needs - of every person in the organisation, including themselves.

I believe the successful business of the future will know, appreciate, and act on the fact that profit comes from serving human needs – of staff and customers alike - to identify and achieve a harmonious balance of business and personal goals. This would become the core of strategies to re-purpose the aims and structure of:

- their business,
- each job and

- the role, talents, skills, passions and personal goals of each person (at every level).

Not easy, but any business that doesn't make that their target is going to fall by the wayside.

I don't have all the answers but I do have a focus that I know works and directly contributes to the process. It all stems from "when you lose yourself in any interest you deeply enjoy, you find yourself". Such experiences bring our real self to the fore. They are an expression of our natural abilities and passions primarily for the sheer enjoyment we get from them.

Think of any interest you passionately enjoy experiencing in your non-work time and you will quickly understand what I mean. Put that into a context where the experience achieves a goal bigger than self and we have found purpose!

Now transfer that thinking to the task of selecting, re-purposing and valuing each person in relation to their job and the goals of the organisation. You have the wherewithal for maximizing their productivity, loyalty and commitment to corporate goals. The result? Engaged staff who want to go the extra mile and the end of any suggestion of "the great resignation".

The process is based on the principle of selecting/ repurposing each of us to a position where our natural talents and passions can be applied to the needs of our job and the organisation.

We then feel valued and, thereby, be allowed the authority and control to make and implement responsible decisions. We become the front window of the business in relation to our area of responsibility and expertise.

I suggest you test this process in one part of your organisation and watch that group flourish.

If this seems impractical – at least in the short term - I have three other options for gradually building greater recognition/valuing of people's individual natural talents into the workplace culture.

1. Extending work skills audits to include those that staff use in their personal time and which have potential relevance to work place needs. The best example I know of is the engineer who runs a small drama group (and writes his own material) in his personal time. Excellent for running staff role-playing sessions. There are many examples of skills developed outside of work in most workplaces today, usually in the form of the 'go to' people when needed. The organizer of social events, the computer whiz, the mother confessor for people in trouble. Think how much the organization lost when anyone left after many years of

service. Many of their 'go to' abilities were developed in their own time for enjoyment.

2. Official encouragement of all staff to have a passionate interest outside their workplace environment, on the basis that it is important to mental health/wellbeing and life-work balance. This can be supplemented by encouraging team leaders to allow one team member per meeting to outline a creative interest they enjoy outside of work, the skills they use in it and what benefits they get from that interest.
3. The most important tip. The buck must start at the top. Only if and when the CEO supports this approach – personally as well as officially - can it succeed.