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People Quit Bosses—Not Jobs

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People who claim they quit because “I got more money elsewhere,” usually know the cost of saying, “I quit because my boss was a jerk.” Money issues make it impersonal, leaving the relationship friendly if future references are needed.

When Amazon bought Zappos, the shoe e-tailer had a “Pay to Quit” program. New employees who quit received $2,000. Jeff Bezos continued that program, with an enhancement—an additional $1,000 per year, up to a $5,000 immediate cash payout for quitting. Bezos said it showed his workers’ commitment. Instead of taking immediate cash payouts, they made deliberate decisions to re-up with Amazon. (This despite mainstream media telling us Amazon underpays and abuses their employees!)

If former employees use the money excuse to protect references, how can we know the truth? Just ask, “What’s the best—and worst—job you ever had?” If answers revolve around things the boss could control, you know their motivation.

Likely your best teacher was tough and fair, not accepting your “my dog ate my homework” excuse. Employees also value leadership with firm standards. The 1980s saw huge cult followings of short-lived management fads. One still relevant is The One Minute Manager. Their recipe for good management included “One Minute Goal Setting,” “One Minute Praising” and “One Minute Reprimands.” Most readers remember the key phrase, “Catch Your People Doing Something Right.”

In the 1970s and ’80s, WWII GIs were in upper management. Trained in the military “Command and Control” management style, they rejected spontaneity or deviation from the norm. “Control” meant correcting the behavior of those who deviated and return them to the norm, regardless of any benefit from their non-standard innovations. This style clashed with the up-and-coming Baby Boomer employees. (You thought this was a unique Millennial trait?)

Did you see 2015’s updated The New One Minute Manager? Spoiler Alert: the “One Minute Reprimand” was changed to “One Minute Re-Direct.” Why? Author Blanchard tells us it’s because everyone in the workplace is a learner. I disagree; not everyone is a learner. Nor does everyone want autonomy and responsibility. “Re-Direct” is a more sensitive term for those employees who don’t understand their efforts might be less than perfect.

Where Blanchard and late co-author Spencer Johnson, M.D. have it correct is “One-Minute Mutual Goal-Setting” should be the priority. Learn each employee’s goals and work together to see how they can (or unfortunately cannot) fit into your organization. A manager’s job is keeping the right people employed and focused, while separating from those who no longer effectively contribute to reaching the company’s needs.

“Taking employees to industry gatherings helps them understand how vibrant our industry is, keeps us current and energizes the employees” says Lisa Campbell. Lisa brings employees to every event she can since buying Danville Gardens in Danville, Illinois. If you can keep employees gainfully working toward common goals you won’t have to replace them.

Also create an environment where employee and company goals are aligned for a mutual win-win. Invest time to monitor and re-direct each employee’s behavior, keeping your staff energized and you more productive. Remember, we’re all different. We’re told fewer Americans want to be entrepreneurs or be responsible for other people. Unfortunately, this does potentially limit their value to an employer.

Your job as the tough-yet-fair manager is to align each member of your team with your organization’s and employees’ common goals. **GP**

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