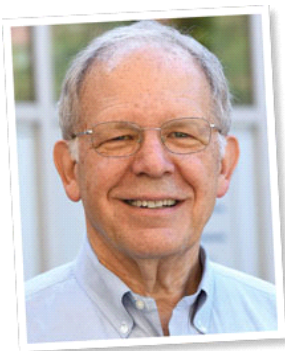


2/1/2022

The Boss I Want to Work For

Bill McCurry



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"That's the kind of boss I want to work for!" The straight-A, high school honor student was visiting with my wife and overheard me record a Zoom interview with Ashleigh Munro of Kiwi Nurseries, west of Edmonton in Alberta, Canada.

Ashleigh is second generation, working with her parents in the growing family nursery and garden center. The student heard Ashleigh say, "Our policy is to be very blunt during job interviews. You either love us or you hate us. We're a very straightforward company. We don't like to bullsh** around. We like to be upfront and tell it how it is. We say this very simply 'You either love us or hate us.' It's okay to hate us because that means you found one thing you don't want to do with your life. You have many years to work. Take the time to find something you enjoy doing."

The student's response caused me to ask retailers about Kiwi's approach. Those over 45 didn't seem to care for it. Those under 45 appeared to appreciate it. The older generation's vision of work was to keep a stiff upper lip and get the job done. The younger generation plainly understands not every job fits every person, so the sooner you find what fits you, the better off you and your boss are.

Kiwi focuses on helping employees grow. "In every entry-level position, we hire many people who haven't had jobs before or worked where they couldn't ask questions. They don't know how to talk to a boss or supervisor and they don't want to appear dumb. This is bad for everyone from both safety and productivity angles, so we force them to talk. Before leaving each day, they must tell me what they learned on their shift. Before getting their paycheck, they must tell our admin person an interesting fact about something random. This way they get used to talking to various people."

Ashleigh is very aware of burnout. "It can happen anytime, especially when we're so heavily focused on running 24/7 this spring. We try to talk to people to understand their stress. People are more aware of others than themselves. As needed, we'll say, 'You look burned out. What's going on?' Knowing their stressors, you can figure out how to avoid them. Some people need consecutive days off; others need occasional time away. One worker, who had just lost a pet, was getting forgetful. We gave her two weeks off and she came back reconnected."

Ashleigh and the Kiwi team are really focused on the entire workplace relationship. She says, "You need to love us or move on."

Sounds hard-nosed, but it really sets up a win-win for both the employee and the company. No surprises. Nothing held back. And it's okay to not want to work there rather than infecting the rest of the team with your negative

attitude.

Ashleigh explains how they constantly work to build team and individual skills. “When you’re here, let’s grow as people and as a company. If you need help communicating, we’ll figure out ways to make you a better communicator.”

Being aware of individual situations means the team won’t have someone fail without offering help. Is it smart to tell someone to take two weeks off in springtime when everyone is working overtime? Yes, if it means they’ll otherwise be lost to themselves and the organization.

Labor shortages are real. Are you the kind of boss your ideal employee wants to work for? Do you focus on the critical issues and get the job done? Ask yourself what you’re doing to be candid and honest with employees. Do you help valuable team members and replace those who don’t see value in the job you offer? Or do you believe in an idealistic work world that doesn’t exist in this century? Which type of boss would you rather work for? **GP**

Bill McCurry would love to hear from you with questions, comments or ideas for future columns. Please contact him at wmccurry@mccurryassoc.com or (609) 688-1169.