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WORK MATTERS



SHANKAR R.
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LEADERSHIP QUALITY

BEING INSPIRATIONAL AT WORK

AS an employee, do you sometimes feel stuck at work? Do you want to be heard? Do you want your contributions to be acknowledged?

I reckon that this is what most employees yearn for. Yet most employers often fail to recognise this.

Bosses need to keep their organisations afloat and should be aware that there is a real risk of losing top talent if their employees are not kept inspired and motivated. Organisational behaviour has evolved, especially in the aftermath of the global Covid-19 pandemic shutdowns, where workplace interface and modalities have changed.

Therefore, leaders need to think differently, and they need to be proficient at moving away from traditional leadership styles. In former days, leaders focused on the "big picture" or the organisation's agenda. Now, it has become far more important for bosses to earn trust and build team loyalty, and consequently inspire a high performance culture.

If you are a leader of people, I have a few recommendations that may help you inspire your team.

Firstly, stop telling or rather "selling" your employees on "why" they must perform better. Bosses tend to just sell the idea of "working hard." Instead, if you focus your efforts on engaging

the team by explaining to them how their contributions will solve problems and lead to the collective good of the company, you will see better results.

People are naturally more inclined to perform at a higher standard when they feel that their contribution matters. Make your team a solution partner. When they feel like their effort makes a difference, they do better.

Some bosses think it is all about money. This is a fallacy. Your employees need to feel that their income is commensurate to industry standards, and that they are not being exploited. That is all they need.

We all work harder and put extra effort when we serve a higher cause. This is why sometimes you might find mediocre or average employees at your workplace, who then produce outstanding results for their mosque or temple committee, or in some service club that they are members of.

Leaders who create an impact that influences social causes always attract high performers.

Next, truly understand your team. Rigid and inflexible bosses who do not recognise the "organic" nature of their employees never inspire performance. Your team needs to know that you appreciate their predispositions, attitudes, and behaviours. This is the only way to understand how best to work with, and motivate them.

Effective leaders learn to do this. Adults are self-directed

learners, so sooner or later, the people you employ will get tired of simply being told what to do. Hence, if you want someone under you to raise their game, create an environment where they are eager to learn and remain relevant.

If your leadership ability is purely predicated on being authoritarian or by inducing fear, you will not get much out of your team. Your team does not have time for you to talk down to them. They need and want to be coached. Do not drain your employees by belabouring or just shouting out instructions. Share ideas, experiences, and really get involved in coaching them.

Leaders tend to extol the virtues of someone working for them and measure that against success. Sometimes this is not enough. You will need to be capable of showing your team career progression and pathways to a promising future for them.

You must be able to encourage your team members to upskill while identifying their natural talents. For many people, this merely requires somebody else to believe in them more than they believe in themselves. This is what an effective leader does.

Bosses must find ways to inspire their team members to be more invested in their work.

Many companies often talk about employees needing a sense of "ownership" to be successful at their jobs. However, they fail to

understand that ownership comes only where there is trust and a desire to go the extra mile.

Giving autonomy to your team will make them solution partners and allow them to make decisions based on what they believe is best for the company. This engenders trust, which ultimately leads to ownership.

Micro-managing your people and then demanding that they develop a sense of belonging and ownership is a futile exercise. Always remember to trust your team, but verify that they can do the job.

And finally, do not underestimate the power of showing respect. Beyond gratitude and praise, show respect for the work of your employees. Establish rules in your team about how respect is earned, then offer it freely and liberally.

Inspiring the team is your primary function as a leader.

Remind yourself of what you needed as a young or new employee. You may be a boss today but in your early days, you surely recognised good leaders as opposed to the bad ones.

They had inspired you and made you feel like you mattered, didn't they?

The writer is managing consultant and executive leadership coach at EQTD Consulting. He is also the author of the national bestseller 'So, You Want To Get Promoted?'

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