

Humility can go a long way

By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST (www.AdviceChief.com)

A retail store manager I know recently had an issue with some of his employees after his harsh comments and brash leadership style during a seasonal rush period caused a lot of worker stress and hurt feelings. So much so that fellow management associates are demanding he make apologies for it. He is quite aggravated by this and thinks he should not have to apologize to anyone because he believes he was correct in his actions as his employees were not meeting work objectives and expectations.

Although there are times when dictatorial and brash leadership styles are needed (times of emergency or critical surges in operations), a leader or manager should not disrespect anyone, regardless of their position or level in the organization. Even if his employees’ work production during the seasonal operations surge was below established expectations, it was vital for this manager to remain courteous to and respectful of each and every person.

In today’s workforce we have to keep in mind there are higher proportions of people whose feelings are extremely

sensitive (due to social media, college safe spaces, and over-protective parents, among other things). If you want worker productivity to be high, you will have to adjust your leadership style accordingly. Therefore, when warranted, reprimands must be done in a way that’s not perceived as rude or offensive (in the eyes of the worker). The days of the majority of employees being thick-skinned go-getters are pretty much gone. (And God help the supervisor who says, “Suck it up, buttercup.”)

Now-a-days you have to tread carefully. You should properly gauge employees’ personality traits to get a good idea how they’ll react to certain types of feedback, criticism, or reprimands. Some employees can handle direct and open criticism while others will cry or get emotional over the slightest hint of criticism. Get to know your people well in order to keep emotional reactions to a minimum.

Even when you believe you are right, you have to understand that being “right” can often be a matter of perspective. From your point of view, you’re right. From someone else’s point of view, you’re wrong and they’re

right. In most instances when you truly are right, yet you acted harshly toward others, I suggest you apologize if you made anyone feel inadequate, offended, or humiliated. Don’t reiterate that you were right, just show some empathy and let them know you understand your words/actions were a bit too much--that next time you’ll be more careful and considerate--but still re-emphasize the need for everyone to jump through hoops when the time is required for it. And if it turns out you were actually wrong, then your apology needs to be swift and sincere. Thank the person or people who turned out to be right, because it may be quite possible that their conscientious attention to duty may well have saved the day.

Holding yourself accountable with your employees is a great first step in getting you and them back on a productive track. Humility can go a long way and can reap great dividends when given with sincerity and authenticity. Humble leaders and managers are much more effective over the long haul than leaders who attack, insult, or blame. Be humble.

~ The End ~