

The McKenzie Mailer

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It Has Been a Tough Year – Don't Make It Tough on Your People

It is amazing how things have changed in the last twelve months. A year ago, companies were having trouble finding enough applicants to fill their open positions. The Dow Jones Industrial Average and NASDAQ were at all time highs. The economy was humming along at an amazing pace. Enron was the darling of all the financial experts. Consumer confidence as well as consumer spending was as high as they have ever been. A new president was about to take over the country after an historic election that took weeks to resolve. The optimism was extremely high everywhere you looked.

It was almost as if we woke up one morning in March and all had changed. The proverbial bubble burst.

Then, on September 11, the unthinkable happened. Many of us are still in a state of shock. Sure, we are getting back to work and some semblance of normalcy, but the concept of what is normal has changed dramatically. None of us really know what the long term effect will be on the country.

These events also have a dramatic effect on your employees and your workplace. If your company's business has decreased over the last several months, many of your employees will have a feeling of uncertainty about their future. This often causes your employees to change as their survival instinct takes over.

When times get tough, the worst often comes out in people. This is when back stabbing and tattle-tailing get rampant. Do not let this happen where you work. Do not tolerate it. Tell those who are guilty of it to cease and desist.

Instead, keep them informed. Adults appreciate honesty and will rally behind you. If you have to cut back on hours to save jobs, tell them what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Check with the local Unemployment Office. They may have a plan that allows employees to collect a portion of their unemployment benefits for shortened work weeks.

Make a pact to yourself to support your employees better than you have in the past. Make a resolution to thank your employees more often. Appreciate their strengths and build on them. Be understanding of mistakes. Allow them to learn from their errors. As a business leader, your patience and understanding will go a long way to ensure the loyalty of your people.

Create an environment that is supportive of family needs. Better teamwork and work friendships will develop when co-workers look out for each other. They will also be more faithful to you, the employer. When employees feel they are a vital part of an organization, they will be less likely to look for other opportunities.

It is easy to build loyalty during good times; the better managers are able to do it in bad times as well. After all, aren't you trying to build long term

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