



Why Use Deep Insight for the Challenges You Face?

Gordon Bethune, the former Chairman and CEO of Continental Airlines used to say, "If you have a buger on your nose and your team says, boss you look great today, because they are too afraid to tell you the truth, then you have a real problem on your hands."

The tip of the iceberg is not what sunk the Titanic; it's what was deep beneath the surface of the still, dark water that did the damage. Many times, we are too afraid or simply choose to ignore the real cause of the problems we are experiencing. Sometimes our own dysfunctional corporate culture prevents us from effecting real changes, as there is fear that we may be opening a can of worms we can't neatly recap. So, we waste time and throw money at fixing problems in ways that can't and won't work. For example, we may mistakenly decide to conduct customer service training for our staff when we have increasing complaints and service issues. When what in fact what may be needed is a hard look at overall employee job satisfaction and motivation levels. A true story: I once went into a large grocery store for something I needed at the last minute. This was not a store I frequented. I noticed after bringing my items up to the counter a sign on the register. The sign read, "If I fail to greet you with a smile today and thank you for your business, you are entitled to 1 dozen eggs for free!" I asked the cashier about the sign as I thought it was quite impressive. Immediately the girl behind the counter retorted, "That's what they say I am going to do, but you can just go get your eggs if you want to." And she was dead serious. The management in this store has a real problem. One that is not going to be fixed by giving away eggs.

I was recently asked to provide a keynote speech on employee motivation at a corporate conference. I asked if I could speak to a few staff members to gauge their feelings about motivation levels at the firm. Management declined the request, as they did not want to unearth any issues that might cause unrest. Of course, the reason for this speech was that trouble already existed. If we simply give our team members an “at a boy” slap on the back, when you and they know that real problems are lurking, it will only lead to higher frustration levels and decreased job satisfaction. They feel disempowered, as it’s apparent that no one really cares or is willing to resolve real issues. They finally give up hope and decide to fend for themselves just like their own management team has chosen to do. Customers and revenue suffer next.

When folks are asked to attend new training programs, there is already the possible stigma of underperformance and the question, “Why do I have to be here.” They ask, “Is this a slam session or another band aide on our problems and a waste of time?” What I have seen effective over and over again is management’s ability to be real and their willingness to admit their own imperfections. When leadership participates in training endeavors that their own team is asked to go through, success can be exponential. If you really want to know what the team is thinking, all you need to do is be present and ask.

We can look away for a day, a month or maybe even a year and stay afloat. But if we choose to ignore real trouble for much longer, the ship will eventually go down. If we are bold enough to look deeply into the challenges we face and take the measures necessary to correct course, new possibilities for success begin to appear.

High turnover of employees and retention of customers is costly. When we decide to listen to our people, they are happier, motivated, committed and therefore easier to retain. Happy employees make happy customers. Happy customers stay put and purchase more. Everyone wins.

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