

# EXIT

## Tribal Managers

### Why people leave organisations

Hot-wired from ages past to work collectively, many of today's employees have a growing sense of separation and fragmentation. It's time to change.

**I**t hurts when good people leave an organisation. It's not just a question of the replacement and retraining costs but also of all the experience that leaves with the individual. So a recent read of Leigh Branham's book *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave* is a timely and useful reminder not only of the issues but, more importantly, for its suggestions on what to do.

While employee retention is an important problem for many organisations, it is not nearly as significant as the hidden costs of good people who have 'left' but haven't left. In other words, those people who are still on the payroll but whose minds, hearts and souls are elsewhere.

### EXIT STAGE LEFT

Top reasons why people quit companies.

- The job or workplace was not as expected.
- Mismatch between job and person.
- Too little coaching and feedback.
- Too few opportunities for growth and advancement.
- Feeling devalued and unrecognised.
- Stress from overwork and work/life imbalance.
- Loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders.

Source: *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave*, by Leigh Branham.

Since the time when we were tribal hunters and gatherers, people have understood that collective strength outweighs the achievements of individuals and have worked cooperatively for the benefit of the tribe. Now, we appear to have forgotten this basic tenet of our success. Power, ego, separation and fear take precedence over care, love and cooperation. We are stuck in a dominant worldview based on the industrial age when we have moved to the information or the biology age.

For 99 percent of our history, people have been tribal hunters and gatherers with a collective worldview and a sense of holism. We worked together and saw ourselves as an integral part of the world in which we lived.

About 7000 years ago the agrarian age began and our worldview started to shift from holism towards fragmentation as we learned to control and separate ourselves from nature.

About 400 years ago (a heartbeat in the time of history) our worldview changed again. It started with the understanding that the world was not flat and that we were not the centre of the universe. We were merely a speck of dust – small, insignificant and powerless. All this was reinforced in the 1600s when Newton showed us that the world moved according to simple and predictable rules, almost like clockwork.

This led to the industrial age, characterised by a shift from a collective to an individual focus. This is the place where most of our organisations still reside and it is the reason why our organisations are failing and good people are leaving (both physically and mentally).

This is a frightening place to be. Human beings are hard-wired through evolution to be connected. Indeed, the threat of separation or exclusion is the basis of all human fear. Because we are no longer connected we see the world as a 'small pie': if you win, I lose. It's why we put people down. It's why our leaders focus on the bad within each of us rather than the good.

There is no doubt that we have made significant material gains as we have over-compensated for our fear of separation by emphasising material matters to the exclusion of spiritual concerns. Many managers are today embarrassed to even talk about love, idealism, intimacy or anything with human depth.

Fortunately our worldview is starting to shift into the information age as, again, science is turning the world on its head. We are starting to find that we aren't mechanical at all. Einstein proved that matter and energy are just different forms of the same stuff and that, because people are very highly condensed energy fields, organisational energy and culture are important. We are

taking lessons from biology and chemistry and a new science called complexity to gain a far better understanding of how the world really works. It has shown the importance of chaos, wholeness and systems based on the interrelationships of things and an awareness of the essential unpredictability of nature and knowledge.

While this is a real revolution in organisational thinking, many managers know little if anything about it. One of the great battles of the next 20 years will be the contest between industrial and information age thinking. After the information age will come the biology age, a journey back to where we started and where all evidence shows we belong.

So what can we do to help make organisations better fit the human condition? How can we start to develop a sense of 'holism' and the 'collective'? The way to shift attitudes is to change behaviours. People will change when they see that their old behaviours no longer work and that other people are also evolving.

Industrial age economics is based on allocating scarce resources: labour, land and capital. Today, fixed assets in the balance sheet account for only about five

percent of the market value of organisations. The other 95 percent is made up of intangible knowledge, relationship, emotional and time assets. So why do we still pretend the five percent matters so much? It's because many of us were trained during a time when fixed assets really did matter and we are too trapped in our thinking to question whether it is still appropriate. To become information age managers we need to focus on the assets that matter.

Let's start by looking for the good in organisations and amplifying it. In their book *How Full Is Your Bucket?* Tom Rath and Donald Clifton report on Gallup Organisation research based on the responses of more than four million employees worldwide from over 10,000 business units and more than 30 industries. Gallup discovered that individuals who receive regular recognition and praise increase their individual productivity, are more likely to stay with their organisation, receive higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers, have better safety records and fewer accidents on the job. According to the authors, most people don't give or receive enough praise. As a result, they are much less productive and less engaged in their jobs.

Clifton says we all have a "dipper" and a "bucket" that's constantly emptied or filled, depending on what others say or do to us. When our bucket is full, we feel great. When it's empty, we feel awful. When we use our dipper to fill another's bucket, by saying and doing things to increase their positive emotions, we also fill our bucket. But when we use the dipper to dip from others' buckets, by saying or doing things that decrease their positive emotions, we diminish ourselves.

A small change in behaviour would propel organisations towards the information age and benefit the way organisations and communities live and work together. How many managers do you know who see their primary function as filling other people's buckets? For, in the end, the future will lie with information age managers. **M**



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## THE DAILY DRUCKER

### Organisations and Individuals

*The more the organisation grows, the more the individual can grow.*

The more the individual in an organisation grows as a person, the more the organisation can accomplish – this is the insight underlying all our attention to manager development and advanced manager education today. The more the organisation grows in seriousness and integrity, objectives and competence, the more scope there is for the individual to grow and to develop as a person.

**ACTION POINT:** Keep learning. Take full advantage of your company's educational benefits.



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