

TROJAN

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Doing A Good Job | BY MARK DUNN, CEO

Regardless of the type of company, it is the people, especially the front-line people, not the supervisors (executives, owners, or managers) who can make or break it. Managers and employees are sometimes at odds with one another, and sheer frustration bubbles to the surface. However, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure the proper people are hired, trained, supported, and overseen.

At some time in their careers, most employees have felt an employer was unreasonable. Maybe they felt underpaid, unappreciated, or overworked. I'm not talking about the rare cases where the employer is in the wrong; there are laws to govern that type of behavior. I'm talking about your life choices and decisions.

I am a fortunate individual; I feel very blessed. I wake up each day and look forward to going to my job. It wasn't always so, but that's where I am now. It's my choice to work where I work, to earn what I get paid, to determine the level of skill I develop, and to decide what to do with my life. Guess what? Whether you're an employer, staff, manager, doctor, hygienist, front office clerk, or receptionist, you have the ability to make those same choices.

On occasion, when addressing Trojan staff, I share my thoughts on employment. I always begin by saying I'm not directing my thoughts to any one individual, and I certainly don't want to drive employees away. I then continue, "If you don't wake up in the morning wanting to come to work here, then maybe you should consider leaving. Life is too short to feel as if you're stuck somewhere or as if you're going to prison. You need to find a place where your job is not 'work.'"

I have had employees leave after hearing this message. When that happens, it is unfortunate for me in the short-term, but fantastic for both of us in the long-term. The employee will continue the journey to find a job that's not "work," and hopefully, I will find an employee who finds a job with Trojan that's not "work."

The relationship between employee and employer has somehow become distorted since I entered the workplace over thirty years ago. When I think about the relationship in today's terms, the word "entitlement" comes to mind. As if the company owes the employee a job. That should never be the case. The employee/employer relationship is not a union, but an arrangement in which the mutual, primary objective is a financial one.

Although the reasons for hiring employees vary, the primary one is to assist in achieving the employer's objective, not the other way around. Just imagine how many businesses would be successful if a manager's objective were to hire employees so they could have money to buy things! Sounds ridiculous; however, that may be the employee's reason for looking for a job. This is why it is so critical for the employer to uphold responsibility for hiring the right people and to provide a supportive environment that will allow employees to perform their responsibilities. On the other hand, the employee should help reach the business objectives and contribute to the supportive environment.

To make sure this happens, everything needs to be laid out and openly communicated, so there are no misunderstandings. Items to be discussed include pay scale, job description including standards and expectations, benefits, and the possibility of future promotions. As needs, responsibilities, and expectations change, continuous assessment and discussions should occur between employee and employer. Keeping communication open and frequent will serve to enhance and strengthen the relationship and ultimately the business itself.

One of my favorite questions to ask people is: "How do you know when you've done a good job?" The overwhelming response has been: "When so and so tells me so." The next time someone asks one of your employees how they know when they've done a good job, I hope they'll reply, "I know what is expected of me and I have a way of measuring whether or not I've achieved that expectation." 

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