Many companies across North America are doing everything they possibly can, or so they think, to create employee engagement. The ones that have a more challenging battle are those, whose culture have been perceived as one of mistrust, and lack of integrity at leadership and executive levels. Many, at these levels in corporations have lost belief in themselves, and yet are hopeful that their people will believe in them. How can this be so?

There can be wonderful things happening within a company to create engagement; however it is being missed and overlooked by the masses. What holds many of us hostage in choosing not to see what is going well, within our companies and relationships with people are at times, the sayings that we ourselves hold in our heads and come to believe as being the truth. And we don’t get beyond them.

Have you ever heard someone say;

“A leopard may change his spots, but it will always be a leopard”

Or

“Perception is reality”

Or

“Nothing will ever change”

I have. By those high in the ranks of leadership levels. When anyone even thinks or utters any of the above, they have created an atmosphere for manifestation of lack of engagement and resignation in the company and within their own ranks.

“A leopard may change his spots, but it will always be a leopard”.

Where did this come from? Everyday, surrounding us all, are those who are not satisfied with the status quo, and want to ensure, because they were here, that the world will be slightly different. Everyday, surrounding us all, are amazing
human beings who are stopping, taking stock, taking a look at themselves, and consciously making a monumental effort to become a better human being. Everyday, they become, a little more wiser, a little more thoughtful, a little more understanding, a little more caring, a little more compassionate, a little more kind, and a lot more honorable. And after some time, in their quest, they are not the same person that they once were. It has nothing to do with taking any kind of course. It is a huge raising of the consciousness of their own humanity and the ripple effect they are now choosing to generate in the world. And they have been working hard. Is anyone watching?

As a leader, have you recognized them? If you don't, other companies and people will.

You will recognize it in others when you recognize it in yourself. How can a leader believe and see the growth in their people if they don't stop to recognize their own growth and truly learn to believe in themselves? The answer is……they don’t. Some will fake it. But we human beings are pretty savvy when it comes to fake and untruth. We can smell it a mile away.

Do you see the people that YOU lead as who they are now, and the growth they have achieved and sustained? It is when you, as a leader begin to see your own excellence, the difference that you make, the growth that you have achieved, and believe in yourself, that you will then be able to see it in your people. When this happens, your people will then see all the great things in the company and you.

When you stop, take stock, spend time, listen to your people, and see and value who they are right now, at this moment, and not who you perhaps thought they once were, you might be in awe of what you may have been missing. Many leaders create perceptions and assumptions in their heads, without merit, on who the people they lead truly are, and are right off the mark. They will choose to remember perhaps an incident or a time when that person fell on their face, made a colossal blunder, a few years, months or weeks ago, rather than seeing who they now are, and the great human being that they have grown into being. Perhaps the time when they blew it, was the moment that became the catalyst for change that set them on their path….. leading them to uncover their brilliance and their essence. When we see them, we subconsciously continue to look at that blunder . We love to hold other people and ourselves hostage to the past, rather than taking a look at this moment - right now. What we have become and now are.

How many times have we created perceptions about people from the beliefs or perhaps gossip of others rather than finding out the truth for ourselves? We hear one statement about someone and instantly put a label on them, choosing to formulate our own opinions from hearsay, rather than search for their excellence.
We miss it completely, that is, until another company or person starts to lure them away. Then we awaken. We have taken them for granted, not appreciated their value, and missed their brilliance. We have been too busy sleeping or perhaps creating new programs and initiatives for employee engagement. We missed what they had become. But others did not, and now they are gone. And, yet we are surprised?

If you believe that a leopard changes his spots but will always be a leopard, that is what your people will believe as well. And you are setting them up to leave you. You represent the company as the leader. If you don’t look and see the growth of your people, even with all the great things your company may be doing, then your people will not see it in the company.

“Perception is reality”

A statement that thoughtlessly, carelessly and effortlessly gets tossed out, and couldn’t be further from the truth, thus creating more world of illusion. In the book “The Four Agreements”, Don Ruiz perhaps states it best, “Ninety five percent of the beliefs we have stored in our minds are nothing but lies, and we suffer because we believe all these lies.” The author talks about how the world we have created and see is from our own totally misguided and inaccurate perceptions. Where we perhaps take the easy way and say it is “so” without checking and challenging our assumptions and perceptions. Thus creating our own imaginary worlds. Worlds that simply are not true. About others and ourselves.

As a leader and human being, one of the best things you can do for yourself is this. Never utter or think this statement. Don’t believe it for a minute. Perception is never reality. Most perceptions simply have no basis of fact, truth, or knowledge attached to them. They are often used to create and support what we want to believe, to make ourselves right. Learn to check the validity in the assumptions and perceptions that you have created. And guess what will happen.? Your people will then do the same. And maybe, just maybe, they will then see all the great things that are truly happening in front of their eyes, within the company, and with you.

“Nothing Will Ever Change”

The drumbeat of the resignated leader. And thank God, there are those in the world who do not believe this for one minute.

Anything is possible if you believe it to be so. Nelson Mandela didn’t believe this statement, neither did Rosa Parks, nor Viktor Frankl, nor Terry Fox, nor did Christopher and Dana Reeve. But you don’t have to be a famous person to toss this statement out the window forever. All you have to do is believe. It is when
you believe in yourself that you will start to believe in those you lead. You will then see that everything and everyone can change. Many have, we have just been asleep.

All of the people mentioned above were passionate people. They were passionate about life, and their causes. They didn’t behave themselves, and were not conformists. They knew that everything is possible, and were not afraid to stand up for what and who they believed in. And they all believed in themselves. The world is slightly different because they were here. And your world, if you choose, can also be slightly different because you were here too.

Take a look at the people in your world. If you as a leader have lost your passion, observe who you are hanging around with. Perhaps others who are also resigned? Who we allow into our world and our lives is a reflection of who we are. If you, as a leader have lost your passion, just hang around for awhile with those passionate people in your ranks and in the world that truly believe that everything can and will change. Their spark will ignite you. And then you, as a leader can set your world on fire. Witness as the passion rises up in your people and watch as everything changes.

Many companies spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on trying to engage their employees. Perhaps a lot of money can be saved.

Is it possible that if the leaders themselves do nothing more than honor and recognize their own brilliance they offer to the world, and then see it in others, that the first step will be taken?.

Is it possible that if leaders learn to appreciate and value themselves, that they will then be able to appreciate and value their people?

Is it possible that if the leaders seek truth for themselves and throw away misguided perceptions and illusions that they have created, that their people will soon learn to do the same?

Is it possible that when leaders believe that everything can and will change for the better, that their people will believe it too?

Believe in yourself, believe in your people, believe that leopards do change, that perception is never reality, and that everything can and will improve. Concern about engagement scores will cease to exist.

And the world will then be slightly different.................. because you were in it.

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