

Submitted by HRM Partners, arbora partner in Finland

Blind, Cynical or True?

Employers' competence and fairness has an effect in their employees' degree of commitment. People with blind, calculating, seeming or indifferent commitment are a threat.

An employment contract forms a juridical bind between employer and employee. It also states the economic, clearly measurable compensation and benefits that the employer gives and the employee gets.

However, an employment contract is only the framework of commitment. "It is the psychological contract that deepens the relationship and comprises the real content of commitment. The nature of a psychological contract takes its form when the employees deliberate how they feel about the work, how well they feel when they come to work, how contented they are at work, and how they answer the question whether their work is profitable and whether they really like it", E. Olavi Salminen, Senior Consultant and Psychologist with HRM Partners Ltd says. He emphasizes that commitment is important reciprocally as well. One should ask how truly the company commits itself to its people by the psychological contract.

Seeming commitment and artificial effectiveness can be characteristic of such employees who are professionally competent but fall into a vacuum of uncertainty when they meet with a period of change. At times of transition this kind of people's feelings of uncertainty and anxiety grow stronger while their efficiency and productivity decrease.

"In such a vacuum employees seem to be busy even though they are not very efficient. They seem to work even if they do not really know what they should do. They assert that they are competent and guard their position. As managers this kind of people think that their colleagues and their departments are their competitors. Seemingly committed people often tighten their language and become more rigorous towards other people."

There are seeds of negative consequences hidden in unconditional and excessive commitment. E. Olavi Salminen points out that commitment should at its best be optimal, well balanced and conscious. Both excessively and indifferently committed employees are risks for both themselves and the employer.

"People living in today's information society should be well-informed about commitment. Blindly, excessively committed people work hard without analysing their life and situation. They do not realize that there are also other things in life apart from work. Someone who overcommits himself is also at risk of becoming very ill."

Employees who are calculating about their commitment may be question marks for themselves and risks for the employer since it is difficult to keep them in the company, at least by means of economic benefits only. "Cynically committed persons play games, secure the rear, and measure out what they can get. They calculate and are ready to defect if their calculations indicate that the rewards would be greater elsewhere."

Truly committed employees' relations to work, employer and company are based on free will. They make decisions on the ground of their own choices. "They are also capable of asking questions and questioning things. They are at ease with what they get from work, what they give to it, and how they feel about their commitment and feel the pleasure generated by it."

professionally committed directors are more likely to be rewarded by the results. Devoted leadership is vanishing."

A feeling of fairness is an increasingly important factor when people choose jobs, or decide whether to stay in a company or to leave it. Key people expect fair rewards. "The better people are convinced of the fairness of the rewarding system the better they commit themselves. Commitment weakens if they feel that only a few people can benefit from the results, especially if it happens at their expense."

It requires skills and style to deal sensitively with employees that have been given notice or are leaving by choice. Otherwise commitment may be disturbed in many ways. Leaving people may search for new jobs overcome by a negative and distrustful attitude unless their departure, outplacement and transfer are managed skilfully and professionally.

It is good for people to go through their indignation, depression and shock that may result from their severance. By means of professional support from outside they learn to know themselves and their strengths, and they understand that the time of leaving can be an opportunity to learn new things and a chance to realize new possibilities. It is always a question of a process that can last from a couple of months to a year. The average time from the beginning of an outplacement process to a new job is about 4 months," E. Olavi Salminen says.

"A good management of severance situations also helps the employees remaining in the company to maintain true commitment and trust in the company's skills. A skilful management of severance phases generates good results for the people transferring, to ex-colleagues and to the former and the present employer. The people in the service of the former employer maintain their commitment and the new employer gets a positive employee ready for a new commitment."

Bridge of commitment
E. Olavi Salminen

How do people make the transition from old jobs to new ones without losing faith in themselves, collapsing mentally, turning bitter, and feeling guilty or without accusing others? People who have been given notice or who have left a job are coached in an outplacement process so that

- they are aware of their situation and cope with it (the reasons for the leaving as well as bitterness and other negative feelings).
- they recognize their profile of competence, their strengths and weaknesses.
- they can define their personal goals, what they want from life and work.
- they are capable of expressing their strengths in the form of sales arguments.
- they learn how to search for good new jobs by using various methods.
- they land in the jobs and environments that they have chosen and which they regard as good for their career development.

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