



Marketplace Flash

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Any Room for Improved Efficiency?

As the economy continues to recover, efficiency is often the topic of conversation among the pundits. Since the year 2000, Corporate America has been reducing costs to increase efficiency. Mostly this means that jobs were eliminated and that the remaining workers were tasked to handle the demands of the business. Presumably, as businesses grows, more profit will flow to the bottom line as companies resist the urge to add workers. To some degree this appears to be happening. Nevertheless, is there any room to improve efficiency?

It is reported that only 26% of workers are fully engaged in their work at any point in time and 19% are fully disengaged (“Engagement’s Ringing Endorsement”, *Fast Company*, April 8, 2004). In this context, disengaged means that workers consciously act in ways that negatively impact their organization. In other words, these workers are sabotaging their organizations. The implication is that the remaining 55% of workers are partially engaged suggesting that they are not functioning on all eight cylinders. This means that the majority of productive work is performed by 26% of the work force.

The American Fraud Examiners reports that 6% of the revenue from Corporate America is lost to fraud (“Hard to Trust Anyone These Days”, *New York Times*, May 6, 2004). In other words, 6% of the potential net profit of Corporate America is eliminated by embezzlement.

Another .4% of potential net profit of Corporate America is lost to depression (see *Gleanings*, July 2003 on my website); however, the unknown factor is the impact of depressed workers on fellow workers.

Worker sabotage, embezzlement, and depression clearly impair any organization’s ability to function efficiently. What is the root issue? Could the answer relate to character or be spiritual in nature? Worker sabotage and embezzlement are thefts of time, trust, and/or resources. Depression is rooted in fear, unbelief, unmet expectations, and discouragement. The antidote for sabotage and embezzlement is the golden rule – treat others the way you want to be treated. The antidote for depression is peace and contentment. So how do workers avail themselves of these spiritual antidotes?

Researcher George Barna reports that the number of people who have not attended church in the past 6 months, other than for a wedding or funeral, has nearly doubled since 1991 (“Number of Unchurched American Adults Nearly Doubled”, *Charisma*, May 6, 2004). This suggests that people are increasingly not looking to the church to help define their values and principles. So where do people get their values and principles? I submit that most people mindlessly, unwittingly, and osmotically absorb the values and principles of their culture. If this is true, a manifestation of a culture with a declining value system will most certainly be a decline in organizational performance, which is what is happening in America. This intimates that culture does not have the answers.

If the root issue of disengaged workers, embezzlement, and depression is spiritual in nature, then the solution must be spiritual. For those who believe the Bible is God’s revelation to man, the role of the church is to help man understand the values and principles that God blesses. But if workers no longer look to the church for their values and principles for living, then the spiritual sickness in society will continue, and its manifestation in Corporate America will only increase. Sarbanes-Oxley cannot solve the problem; only personal spiritual transformation in the hearts of individual workers can effect the change to enable Corporate America to operate at a high level of productivity. My thesis is that people who personally practice God’s values and principles will be more productive workers. The evidence will be more efficient organizations.