



When you balance emotions at work, you will be better able to maintain a healthy environment. **By BARTON Goldsmith**

In the film, *A League of Their Own*, Tom Hanks chastises one of his players, and she begins to cry. "Are you crying?" asks Hanks. "You can't cry... there's no crying in baseball!"

Yet, baseball and business are emotional games, and feelings are everywhere. Look at the stock market, the dot coms and the dot gones.

Feelings abound on Wall Street. The emotions created by a World Series or an IPO are tremendous. The transfer of power as Jack Welch retired from GE created front-page news, and an outpouring of feelings from Corporate America. A business can generate as much emotion in its people as a team can generate in its fans.

In reality, however, most leaders

try to keep emotions out of business. After all, emotions running rampant make things difficult. Why? Emotional team members can have a significant negative impact on performance. Emotional people can perform erratically, engage in arguments, and refuse to work together. The result is generally a clash of egos and loss of productivity.

Emotions in Business



Understanding feelings at work

One of the ways negative emotions present themselves in the workplace is in team members withdrawing and being unavailable to their co-workers. This is a reaction to hurt feelings. Put simply, people act out their pain. In the workplace, they tend to respond emotionally because the people they work with on a daily basis become a surrogate family and people tend to react and respond like family members.

If the family/company has good communication skills and thrives on interaction, people act in a functional manner, and resolve differences appropriately. If, however, the family/company is dysfunctional, individuals often act very much like children playing in a sandbox, i.e., "Your truck ran over my truck, and I'm not playing with you anymore."

Furthermore, when people get their feelings hurt, they can become an unconscious saboteur. This can manifest in a number of ways, including not contributing at meetings, missing deadlines and even offending clients. 99 per cent of the time, this is unconscious behaviour. People are not aware they are doing it since the unconscious controls 90 per cent of our actions. If unhealed emotions are not addressed, companies can experience significant losses in terms of personnel, a dwindling customer base, financial success and market position.

Keys to motivation

All businesses want motivated team members. They spend time and money pumping up and motivating staff. They want to build passion, and what is passion but emotion.

So, on one hand, companies work to create feelings [when it serves them] and, on the other, they attempt to suppress them. You

Emotions at Work

Until recently, emotions were considered a forbidden topic in the workplace. They were nobody's business, and they had no place in business. They were not to be discussed; they were to be left at home.

Today, research on how emotions affect creativity, productivity, and career success has put a new spin on the subject. Books such as *Emotional Intelligence* and *Executive EQ* are increasing awareness that employee emotions aren't something that can be, or should be left at home.

Instead, management is taking into consideration the fact that their success is directly related to their ability to work productively with employee emotions. They are realising that how well they elicit and sustain positive emotional states in their employees plays a major role in their organisation's success or failure.

Employees who feel secure, committed, and passionate, find organisational changes energising. They see these changes as something that adds "spice to life," not something to be feared and resisted. Thus, an organisation's ability to respond nimbly in the marketplace is directly related to employee emotions.

— Team CW

can't have one without the other. But, you can balance emotions and maintain an emotionally healthy environment.

Emotional and passionate people make things happen, but they are not encouraged in business settings where detached, cool and objective decision-making skills are considered to be strengths. Passionate people threaten the *status quo*. They create change, and shake things up. Their passion begets persistence. Motivation, creativity and productivity are energy-boosters businesses want, but what is the company doing to create that culture?

Encourage open communication and feedback. Once team members are able to really talk with each other, the blocks to risk-taking, overcoming barriers and letting go of ego diminish.

Here are 10 ways to encourage effective emotion in companies:

1. Find the emotional connection to

what people do and with whom they do it

2. Create an environment of openness; encourage people to talk
3. Make it okay to talk about emotion within the organisation
4. Give people training in basic conflict resolution skills
5. Encourage informality; functional groups tend to be more relaxed
6. Encourage team members to bring their "whole" selves to work
7. Admit publicly that not all management's ideas are good
8. Encourage team members to think out loud
9. Promote the belief, "Laughter is good, playing it 'cool' is not."
10. Recognise the emotional connection to work makes the impossible seem possible.

Meeting the challenge

Today's CEO spends half time being therapists to their staff; solving their [mostly interpersonal] problems. It is difficult to conceive the amount of time and energy lost.

Once team members learn to understand and deal with emotions, that time could be put to building the company. Some companies have staff therapists, or executive coaches, some do emotional release sessions and others use team-building exercises. All of these efforts add directly to the bottom line.

The challenge lies in creating a culture that understands the losses suffered from negative emotions, and utilises the power of positive emotions.

Stay Well

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