

BUILDING BLOGS:

TIPS FROM THE MORRISON TEAM

The Morrison team strives to provide value-added resources to clients and colleagues, which includes the regularly posted Morrison blog. Each of our team members contribute, drawing on their own experiences and offering solutions to issues they've encountered. They choose their own topics, which have included business tips, work-life balance, organizational ideas, debt matching, cyber exposure, and more. A new post is added to our Morrison blog on our website every Thursday at morrisonco.net/blog or you can connect with us on LinkedIn or like our Facebook page to stay up to date. In the meantime here are a few examples of blogs and topics we've covered this past year:

CHOICES

"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

—J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

My oldest son loves the Harry Potter novels, and J.K. Rowling's characters embody the above quote—it is their choices throughout the novels that poignantly reveal who they truly are. Similarly for us, each day is made up of hundreds of choices and, it is these choices that show who we truly are. What do the little choices you make each day reveal to those in your workplace about who you are, your values, and how you lead?

- What do my daily interactions with my colleagues reveal about my leadership and my values? Am I present and engaged or distracted and unaware? Am I pleasant or irritable?
- What do my daily interactions with my direct reports say about my leadership and my values? Do they demonstrate that I value and respect them? Do I listen to understand? Am I approachable or arrogant?
- What do my daily choices about my work product reflect? Do my choices reflect the value I place on my work and my company? If not, why?
- Are there discrepancies between what I want to reveal and what my choices actually communicate about my values and leadership?
- What are concrete ways I can practice making different choices to more accurately reflect the values I want to live out?

May we approach our daily choices intentionally, seeking to grow in alignment between what we want our lives to reflect and what our choices actually reveal about who we are and what we value.

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THE DREADED "F" WORD

I have participated in countless fraud discussions and it's somewhat alarming to learn when members of management haven't seriously considered the possibility of fraud. Unfortunately many small businesses share this mentality, according to a *CNBC/SurveyMonkey Small Business Survey*. Only one percent identified the threat of crime or vandalism as the most critical issue facing their business.

A 2018 *Global Study on Occupational Fraud and Abuse* produced by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners showed small businesses (<100 employees) lost almost twice as much per scheme compared to larger companies. A single fraud scheme could cause significant devastation, so what can be done to mitigate the risk?

There are three areas that must be present for fraud to be successfully carried out:

Opportunity can be found by exploiting weaknesses in internal controls. Smaller businesses often do not have robust internal controls due to lack of resources and staffing requirements.

Reducing the **pressure** to commit fraud can be difficult for employers when it comes to employees' personal lives. However, companies can help by maintaining an open door policy and recognizing red flag behavior.

Rationalization can be difficult for businesses to control. Emphasizing clear expectations and consequences and continual ethics trainings can help employees understand the severity of committing fraud, in turn making justification more difficult.

Opportunity for fraud is a key element under management's control and can be greatly reduced by investing in reviewing, identifying, and addressing potential weaknesses in your company's internal controls. It would be wise to reevaluate your internal controls before it is too late.

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THE SILVER LINING: THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

COMMUNICATION STYLES

“Excellent communication skills, both verbal and written.” You’ll find this is a requirement in most job descriptions—as a member of the Morrison People Team, who is actively recruiting to fill positions at our Morrison clients, I see this often but what does it mean to have excellent communication skills? Most people probably understand what it takes to have top notch communication skills, but in the grand scheme of things...styles vary! So, dare I say the term “excellent communication skills” is quite subjective?

An article published by Forbes titled, *4 Ways To Combat Workplace Communication Breakdowns* addresses different communication styles and how to leverage that diversity for the good of the organization:

- 1. Pay attention to how people communicate** – Learn how people give and receive information in order to promote a positive response. Understanding the communication style of your colleagues can generate more effective interactions.
- 2. Provide the right tools** – “Just as different types of learners in the classroom are more receptive to certain teaching methods, different communication styles lend themselves to certain tools.”
- 3. Be transparent** – Transparency invites honest conversation into the workplace. Sharing company goals with employees helps them understand their contribution to the bigger picture.
- 4. Provide the resources** – Trainings provide individuals the opportunity to use their communication style as well as observe their coworkers’.

Although excellent communication skills are essential for most jobs, it is important to understand they may come in different styles.

“Because every style has its strengths, and it’s through building an inclusive environment where team members can effectively share and communicate their different perspectives that you’re able to create that powerful synergy that really gets things done.”

To learn more about your communication style or the styles of others around you check out the communicator chart on our blog post: morrisonco.net/blog/communication-styles.

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“These are uncertain times.” This is a phrase we’re all hearing and saying a lot in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. What else is there to say? The surreal events, cost of human life, and economic shutdown has left the most eloquent speechless and paralyzed. How do we proceed in our personal lives and in our places of employment (or lack thereof) in this time? Even further, if we find ourselves in a place of leadership, how do we lead our people, our organizations, and businesses when we quite literally don’t know what tomorrow will bring?

Patrick Lencioni, organizational health expert and prolific author, offers invaluable counsel in the Chief Executive article, *Patrick Lencioni: 3 Thoughts for Leaders In a Perilous Time* of how to proceed as a leader in such a time as this:

Thought #1: Be exceedingly human. Show compassion and care in light of all the challenges people are facing and the emotions they are experiencing. Lencioni emphasizes that this concern needs to extend beyond the professional sphere, actively listening and empathizing with fears on a personal level. Even more critical, he claims, is to show vulnerability as a leader and to admit that we don’t have all the answers. We need to be relatable and available.

Thought #2: Be persistent. This is the time for over-communication! Especially as most organizations have transitioned to working remotely, the need for clear and persistent communication is even more critical. One reason is to offset the negative impact that isolation can have on people as social beings. The other reason is that without face-to-face interactions the risk for miscommunication skyrockets. See more about the challenges of leading virtual teams with some helpful tips in Lencioni’s article, *Virtual Teams are Worse Than I Thought*. (Yes, the title is a bit dim, but the content is very constructive!)

Thought #3: Be creative. Creativity is a gift that even social isolation can’t take away from us. As leaders, we need to leverage technology to creatively connect, motivate, and empower our people. Lencioni gives examples like semi-regular video conference meetings where employees can share experiences of how they are dealing with their current situations. Another helpful idea is to encourage people to share movies and games they are playing with their children while stuck at home.

Yes, these are uncertain times. Let’s be leaders who seize the opportunity before us to be exceedingly human, persistent, and creative with our people.

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