

**San Diego, ASSP Chapter**

**Special Projects CHAIR
Brooks Carder, PhD**

**The paper bellow was written by Brooks Carder, PhD, Carder & Associates. He has given us permission to put it on our Chapter Webpage. Dr. Carder is widely published and presented with me (Pat Ragan, NC ASSP Program Chair) at the ASSP PDC in San António. More on Brook’s background can be seen at the New Generation Safety webpage (newgenerationsafety.com )**

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**Treating employees well**

In my recent writing1 I have attempted to make the case that happier employees are more productive more innovative and ultimately more valuable. Perhaps I have made the case to many people. However realize that many people’s idea of treating a subordinate well maybe well off the mark. So let me attempt to explain a bit about what it really means to treat employees well. Of course the final judge of whether an employee is treated well is the employee herself. The basis of what I have written here includes my experience as an employee as well as 25 years of research

**Respect/Trust.** I believe the most important aspect in the treatment employee is showing respect for the individual. That does not mean being polite. It requires for more than that. Ultimately it requires letting the employee make decisions rather than trying to define and control everything that she does.

I have done a lot of work in the safety field over the years. Behavior-based safety is a popular technique which involves carefully defining the actions of a worker to minimize certain kinds of hazards. I have always felt that it was not a good method, in spite of the fact that it reduces accidents. Of course the reason I did not like the method was if I put myself into the position of the employee I would feel that it is disrespectful to be treated like a rat in a Skinner box. Perhaps we should offer to managers a program called behavior-based management. The program would carefully define the manager’s behavior on the job, and an expert would observe her to ensure compliance. Do you think that would be attractive to the manager?

As much as possible you would like the employee to be intellectually engaged with her job. If you go make a change in the way a department or person works is disrespectful not to talk to them about it first. Sometimes you may have to make a decision that would be different from what they would like, but you will still do better if you talk to them first. After all in the end, they know more about their work than you could possibly know. That should be acknowledged. That is respectful.

**Fairness.** Fairness might be considered another aspect of respect. One place where fairness is very important is in pay. The company does not need to offer the highest pay, but the wages need to be perceived as fair. One problem area is excessive pay to executives, particularly when the company is not doing well. This is grossly unfair.

**Appreciation/Gratitude.** Appreciation very interesting word. It has two meanings: 1) I appreciate what you have done, meaning I am grateful for what you have done. 2) The value of my house has appreciated meaning it has increased. There is an interesting relationship between the words here. If I *appreciate* my employees, their value will *appreciate*.

Recognition is one form of expressing appreciation for employee accomplishments. I have written elsewhere about the subject.2 Recognition is useful and important, but only when carried out properly.

**Honesty/Transparency.** Human decency requires honest communication but in the corporate world management needs to go beyond honesty to transparency. This is not always possible but when it is it should be employed. If employees see management as dishonest, which includes nondisclosure of important things, namely a lack of transparency, it becomes virtually impossible for management to communicate priorities, urgency, etc.

**Love.** In a recent article3 I quoted a letter which George Washington arranged to have sent to his captains at Valley Forge about the treatment of their troops. The letter included the following line: “His first object should be, to gain the love of his men by treating them with every possible kindness and humanity, inquiring into their complaints, and when well founded, seeing them redressed.” While Washington does not say it explicitly, if the captain is going to gain the love of the troops, this requires that the captains treat the troops with love. I believe that a truly great leader loves her followers. Of course this is not romantic love. What I am talking about would be covered by this definition from the freedictionary.com. “A strong feeling of affection and concern toward another person, as that arising from kinship or close friendship.”

I believe that most managers and executives would say that they treat their subordinates well. I believe that few would meet the qualifications I have outlined here.

References

1. Carder, B. The Happiness Effect, *Quality Progress*, Jan, 2019.
2. Carder, B. and J. D. Clark. Theory and Practice of Employee Recognition, *Quality Progress*, 25, 25-30, 1992.
3. Carder, B. A lesson from George Washington, *Journal for Quality and Participation*, 41, 1, 34-36, 2018.