

UNLEASHED

By Julius E. Rhodes, SPHR

Years ago, I authored a piece called “Unleashing the Human Spirit at Work.” I’m currently working on a book by the same title but thought the idea of unleashing the human spirit at work needed to be revisited given the talk (much of which I believe is rhetoric) about employee engagement.

It is a sad fact that the very things we thought would make our lives easier have had the opposite effect. The computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones we couldn’t live without have served not to connect us with others but to disconnect us from the people around us and our surroundings. They connect us to a virtual world available 24 hours a day, and it can be very difficult to choose to escape.

Being Social

Many years ago, someone said we’d become disconnected from our work and from each other. That statement was true when it was made and, to be sure, is true today, but it does not have to be true in the future. Who, you may ask, was the brilliant person who said it? I’ll save that for later—the answer might surprise you.

We are by nature social beings who seek the company of others. So why have we fallen so far off the path of social interaction and niceties? There are many possible reasons, but let me focus on the insidious only-me attitude that has taken hold in our society.

Today we live in a world that is instant everything and readily disposable if it does not meet our needs. This mentality has caused us, I believe, to lose focus on the shared sacrifice and responsibility each of us must make to ensure a better outcome not just for ourselves, but for the people around us as well. Additionally, the lack of a shared sacrifice has caused us to extinguish

the once bright flame of hope we used to hold up as a matter of routine and light one only during times of crisis or immediate need.

Each of us has to have fire in our commitment not just to the roles we play, but more importantly, to the very real relationships we need to sustain us. If you are committed to establishing relationships that help you thrive and allow others to do the same, share that belief. We cannot be timid or afraid when it comes to making necessary course corrections, especially when they allow us to reconnect with the people around us and our surroundings.

Doubt

It is certain that as you go about this process of sharing and inclusion, not everyone will get it or buy into what you are doing. However, the people who do will greatly appreciate the effort you have invested in them and the connections that ensue, and you’ll provide a model for them to do the same for others.

Margaret Meade once said, “Never doubt if a small group of people engaged in concerted activity can make change, for indeed it is the only way change can occur.” If we are serious about engagement and reconnecting with people as people, we cannot wait for someone else to start the ball rolling—we have to be about taking action.

And the person who said we are disconnected from our work and from each other? That was Karl Marx. **P**



JULIUS E. RHODES, SPHR, is founder and principal of the mpr group and author of *BRAND: YOU Personal Branding for Success in Life and Business*. He can be reached at jrhodes@mprgroup.info or 773.548.8037.

