

Overworked and disillusioned? Depressed and tired of the rat race? Are your colleagues looking at the clock as the end of the day comes near? Do you hear the endless talk of leaving for greener pastures? All of us have an idea of what a poor company workplace seems, feels and sounds like.

However, it doesn't have to be like that. If you're working or doing eight hours a day, five days a week, then that time in the office should seem like a huge waste. Workers who are contented will work harder and be more efficient – Furthermore, they're very more likely to remain. In turn, companies will gain more productivity and lesser turnover.

This is where compassion comes to play. Businesses can be places where honest camaraderie flourishes; they can be workplaces where “solidarity” and “empathy” are not new ideas; however, rather a significant aspect of the business dynamic.

The best workplaces are compassionate workplaces.

Chapter 1 - Work can be hard to tolerate; however, companies don't need to make their workers suffer.

If you're part of the several people who leave their house to go to work every day, you understand that, more often than not, enduring nonsense and stress is only part of the work. At work, suffering through stress is really prevalent and it's very easy to forget that it's an actual issue.

It's unfortunate; however, work can make people suffer without any need.

Patty gives an example of such a case. The authors came across her while they were doing research on the part of compassion in the place of work.

Patty was an executive assistant who did work for numerous managers in a company. She adored her job and was mainly good at forming strong bonds with her managers. She basically knew them and understood how to forestall their needs.

Afterward, the company chose to restructure, and a series of significant jobs were randomly assigned among the company's numerous executive assistants. Patty received the message about the transformation late on a Friday evening, and on Monday morning she had been transferred to a distant building already.

Patty immediately saw herself secluded and depressed. Top of it all, her key ability to form a relationship with the managers couldn't be used any longer.

This only goes to reveal that some management techniques will bring about irrelevant suffering when the effect it will have on workers isn't put into thought.

However, some firms can and do lessen workers' suffering – the answer rests in compassionate leadership.

While they were doing their research, the authors came across a company leader known as Andy. One day, while in a meeting, he'd seen that one of his best workers named Xian, was looking really low. Therefore, he asked Xian what was going on.

Xian told him that his sister died in China in an accident. However, although he was still grieving, Xian had chosen to still come to work.

In his status as a leader, Andy had to choose how to respect Xian's personal life in a professional environment. He chose compassion. Then he told Xian that he could take the time off he required and would be urged to speak to Andy any time he felt it was essential. Andy even called Xian to spend time at his house and then meet his family.

This compassionate method worked, and Xian was able to cope with his grief well.

Chapter 2 - Compassion helps in businesses' performance and this can serve as a source of innovation.

Business people are strong and have a tendency to take extreme methods. However, at times, showing compassion to employees isn't only beneficial for them as individuals; the business can eventually reap the advantages.

Basically, businesses that value compassion will do better.

Kim Cameron an administrative science expert published his research on the effects of what he named virtuousness on business revenues in the year 2004.

In Cameron's mind, workplaces could be more productive if the workplaces more compassionate. And, definitely, more productive employees signified that companies' finances were better. Furthermore, his research revealed that companies that have compassion did better at keeping both customers and workers.

Studies such as that of Cameron's are uncommon. However, his work has been confirmed by research in similar fields. These, as well, showed the power of compassion.

A Gallup poll that was done immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, showed the vital place of compassion in business. It showed that compassionate companies witnessed workers' enthusiasm and engagement levels increase sharply. Employees across the nation had been hit by the attacks and the firms that knew this did better.

The firms that only wanted the business to carry on as usual quickly saw their workers disengaging, and in some situations even destroying the work surrounding.

Another advantage of compassion is that it's really a likely source of innovation.

Let's take a look at the work of Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy. In 1977, he created an eye clinic in Southern India. His aim was to give high-quality eye care, and he wished to do it for huge numbers of patients.

The business pattern he formed was very easy: the patients would pay the money could afford. From a clinic, he was able to form an entire franchise of Aravind Eye hospitals. In the year 2011, these hospitals were treating 7000 patients daily, and one-third of the treatments were done for free

Despite the fact that the Aravind Eye hospitals were treating a lot of their patients free of charge, they stayed profitable. The reason was that high-quality treatments kept on attracting richer patients who could pay more, and poorer patients.

Aravind Eye hospitals have gotten so much attention in the international press. Perhaps other firms could be motivated by them and hence copy their innovative model formed on the power of compassion. All these show that a company will gain if compassion is displayed to clients and to workers.

Chapter 3 - Detecting suffering at work is not usually an easy thing; however, asking and being curious help.

Now, let's dig deeper and come to understand what compassion really entails. The first phase entails the skill to notice when a person is suffering.

However, detecting suffering at work isn't usually an easy thing as you might assume. Therefore, how do you really begin with doing that? Nevertheless, workers are barely going to state their issues to their employers at the top of their lungs.

The authors questioned Dorothy, one of the workers who was working for an insurance company. During that period, her husband was in the hospital as a result of kidney failure –however, she hadn't told anybody about the issue. Rather, she began being absent for days work, which was completely unusual. She immediately saw herself at risk of losing her work completely since she wasn't in the office really often.

The issue was that Dorothy was embarrassed she required to take a break. Her reason was that she might lose her work if she began asking for leaves of absence.

This is precisely the kind of case when employers have to be aware of what's happening. Dorothy went to see boss Sandeep and said to him that she didn't know what to do. However, Sandeep had already observed Dorothy's rare absences. He could notice that she was flushed with embarrassment and was obviously tired.

Sandeep did the correct thing. Rather than punishing her for being absent a lot of time, he asked Dorothy to tell him precisely what the issue was, and the reason why she hadn't quite been her top-performing self in the last few weeks.

Inquiry and curiosity are the significant tools that are required when you're being compassionate in business. They'll make it very easy for you to notice suffering.

The reality is, when we notice inconsistent performance, we're usually far really quick to jump to conclusions that, honestly, aren't really compassionate.

However, it doesn't need to be like that. Reut Livne-Tarandach an organizational researcher did a field study in camps for children whose parents suffered from cancer. She found out that it was significant for camp counselors to be curious about the children, and to constantly ask about them about how they are feeling.

Significantly, she discovered that the camps that taught the counselors to ask questions softly had less disagreement between campers and counselors than those counselors that didn't.

The message here is that company managers and leaders can use the same method and patterns of inquiry to learn more about their workers' feelings, and hence avoid suffering in the place of work.

Chapter 4 - People read and respond to suffering in manners that can either enhance compassion or minimize it.

The business industry can be an energetic, inventive and progressive place. However, unluckily, some of its clichés can be really destructive as well.

You usually listen to people say nonsense such as, “Work is not compatible with personal life,” or “When at your place of work, you’re just there to work.” However, behaviors such as this will just lead to suffering in the long run, since they depict suffering as a thing you just have to bear with.

In general, suffering is “rationalized” in three various manners. These meanings are destructive since they perpetuate the idea that compassion is a feeling with no part in the workplace.

Therefore, what are these risky rationalizations?

Researchers have a word for quick meanings: appraisals. Those kinds of appraisals happen at lightning speed – we don’t even know that we’re making those appraisals.

If you judge a person liable for their own suffering, that’s an illustration of the first kind of appraisal. Just reflect back to when last you held a person responsible for a mess he had got himself into. You had shut down compassion before you had even had an opportunity to sympathize.

The second kind of appraisal happens when you choose that a person doesn’t warrant your attention – and like that, compassion has vanished. For example, people that are homeless are usually viewed as undeserving by the whole society since they don’t work.

Lastly, the third appraisal that shuts down compassion happens when you believe that you don’t have the energy or means to assist. It’s somewhat usual for people to, for instance, overlook a person asking for directions in the street under the deception that there’s basically no time to wait or stop.

If there’s a message to be learned from the human routine of quick appraisal-making, it’s that blame should be reserved. If you’re slow in making a decision due to habit, then places of work will be more compassionate.

If a person comes to work late, or if a person makes a bad decision during a business deal, there’s no point treating them harshly. Rather than instantly blaming them, pause, and search for the sources of poor performance.

When Hurricane Sandy affected New York, companies, in general, used two methods when workers came late, were absent or made errors. Some companies were clear that they still viewed them good workers and knew that they were still coping the effect of the hurricane on infrastructure and properties; but, other companies put the blame on the workers and even began blaming them of making use of the hurricane as an excuse to slack off. Soon enough, compassion levels in these workplaces reduced to new lows.

Snap appraisals that bring about blame and compassionate workplaces basically can't work together.

Chapter 5 - Empathy is inborn to every one of us; however, if we fail to think about other people's viewpoints, it can be forgotten.

Empathy is a cunning feeling. It's not some feeling that arises from nowhere, totally spontaneous – we really need to put lots of effort in.

The reason is that while empathy is a deep-rooted and inborn emotion, there are numerous means it can be hindered.

Over the past 20 years, various neuroscience studies have shown that we as human beings are not driven by just pure self-interest; as a matter of fact, the brain is wired for empathy.

Practically, this signifies that we're able to read really subtle facial and vocal signs. From those hints, we can know if a person is suffering and, as a result, respond supportively or offer assistance.

Sadly, this potential for empathy can immediately be put aside, and this usually happens in work circumstances. Visualize a person at work gets unjustly blamed for an error. Usually, colleagues will not say anything, since they believe they may need to bear some of the blame if they so much as associate with the person to blame.

Meaning, if empathy could cost us, we usually like to subdue it; we may as well resort to aggressive feelings to hide it.

In general, we regularly end up hindering empathy if we do not relate to other people's viewpoints.

You can get rid of this if you intentionally attempt to picture yourself in another person's shoes and attempt to look for the best approach you could assist them through the circumstance in question. This is called cognitive empathy. Consider it as the opposite of emotional empathy, when you're just attempting to know a person's feelings.

Let's see an illustration of this. The authors visited a law firm while doing their research on empathy. Juana was part of copy clerks and she was feeling unhappy. She had constantly visualized becoming a paralegal; however, she was heading nowhere; photocopying heaps upon heaps of documents daily was barely moving her in the appropriate way.

Trapped in this dead-end work and bored stiff, she began making errors. Soon enough, one of her bosses, a paralegal called Rosita, came down heavily on Juana and told her that she was tired of her regular blunders and mistakes.

Fortunately, Veronica the staff manager interfered. She called Rosita to think of the situation from Juana's viewpoint. By doing this, Veronica discovered a means for Rosita to recover her empathy, and now Rosita could view it from Juana's viewpoint – she got to know that she had to look for means to help Juana. That is the only means that Juana could one day progress to becoming a paralegal, and accomplishing her real potential.

Chapter 6 - Compassion with action is the aim, regardless of how big or little the action might be.

At times having empathy isn't sufficient– you frequently have to display it at the moment. Eventually, empathy is not an emotion that should infiltrate over months. This entails that if you're going to show your empathy well, you'll need to think of yourself as a type of jazz musician: you're going to need to improvise!

Practically speaking, if you understand that you're not good at responding to details in actual-time, you'll need to think about your compassionate choices for action beforehand when it might be required.

But, bear in mind that if compassion is real, it should bring about action.

Let's take a look at Nazima. Nazima was really close to Chenni her sister as well as Faith, Chenni's daughter, who had Down's syndrome. On one occasion, Chenni called Nazima while in tears. Faith had died.

Nazima was an important employee in her place of work and was in the middle of arranging a really vital board meeting. But, it immediately became obvious to Nazima that she wouldn't be able to attend the meeting, although it would put her colleagues under lots of stress.

Fortunately, Nazima had the assistance of an empathetic colleague named Ed. He was willing and prepared to intervene.

As a matter of fact, being really flexible to let colleagues take a break when they're suffering is the main illustration of empathetic action.

However, it's not just about the big actions; when we talk of displaying empathy, small gestures can be as significant too.

If a person is suffering, being there alone, attentive and present to listen, will reveal that you're compassionate.

In the situation of Nazima's, Ed made sure to ask her every day about how she was doing. However, definitely, this kind of behavior has to be adapted to what the person who is suffering wants. It may feel as though you're pressuring them, and some people basically want to be left alone during situations like that.

Ed did the appropriate thing. He sent an email every day or sent a phone text to Nazima, only to let her understand that everything was well. Also, anytime she displayed the need to talk, they discussed over the phone. These constant instances of getting in touch made sure that Ed's feelings of empathy were strong. As a matter of fact, it made it easier for him to determine the type of assistance she required.

Also, Nazima benefited as well. Without Ed's assistance, she would have had a really difficult time at work while mourning the death of her niece.

Cases such as this go to reveal that compassion and empathy aren't only a friendly smile – you actually need to work on changing that compassion into action.

Chapter 7 - The place of work can be a place of compassion, and companies can actively stimulate compassion.

It's a thing for a person to work on being more compassionate; however, it's really a different thing to transform a whole company's culture. It may be hard though; however, it can be done.

On one occasion, while on a trip as organizational researchers, the authors went to Midwest Billing, a company that is situated in Omaha, Nebraska. The paperwork for the area's hospitals is done by Midwest Billing. The majority of its workers are women and there are few chances for promotion.

What's fascinating is that the company is really efficient and profitable, and the work environment is very compassionate.

On one Monday morning when the authors were visiting, a worker named Dorothy was met with a huge amount of mail stacked up on her desk. All the materials were really similar, most of it was updates about submitted insurance claims.

However, when the other women came got to work, talking and with coffees in hand, they instantly clued into Dorothy's circumstances. They dropped their drinks and went over to assist Dorothy to read the letters.

All of them used good 30 minutes working on the letters; however, when they completed it, the entire updates had been organized and filed. Something that could have taken hours of tedious work for Dorothy had been done within a blink of an eye, all thanks to her coworkers and their compassionate actions?

However, communal compassion doesn't come out of anyplace – it usually needs a fair amount of active support on the part of companies.

Midwest Billings had realized this compassion with the establishment of subunits, just like the one Dorothy was working in. These smaller teams allowed it to be very easy for employees to get to know one other personally and form a culture of solidarity.

Also, this approach had repercussions for new staff hires. The company put a lot of energy into looking for people who would fit into a present group. It wasn't only about if a new worker possessed organizational abilities, for example– they needed to have an actual personal spark.

Also, Midwest Billings set about forming a supportive workplace environment by forming what they referred to as “support pods” of workers. The concept was that these pods would sweep in and help with a worker or sub-unit who was finding it hard to do a huge workload.

Also, the support pod systems eventually became a perfect approach to get new workers to learn what different aspects of the company did, and what each sub-unit was tasked with accomplishing. When employees first got in, they were told to go to the support pods, and just after that did they fit them into a sub-unit.

Chapter 8 - Good leaders direct with compassion and encourage other people to be just as compassionate.

It's normal for humans to get help from leaders during difficult times– we require them for direction and guidance. This is the reason why it's particularly significant for people in positions of authority to be compassionate. If they are compassionate, other people will definitely follow.

Basically, the greatest leaders direct with compassion.

They trust that getting to become familiar with their workers and forming deep personal bonds with them is a significant aspect of their work. They pay close attention to them and really value their workers' personal growth.

If you wish to be a compassionate leader, you're not going to reach anywhere by giving out directions from your position of power; you need to work on forming those significant relationships. Also, It's very more personally rewarding to work in that manner.

Let's consider Pat Christen, the CEO of HopeLab. Her firm makes technology intended to aid emotional well-being.

Usually, Christen, as part of her working day, would use her time knowing what was happening in her workers' lives, and what she could do to best help them.

As part of her attempt to help workers' personal growth, she set apart a specific amount of money for each and every one of them. This money was there in order for her workers to learn anything new that they felt would profit them personally.

That's really different from how firms usually work. In general, funds such as that are sternly kept for educating workers in abilities that will ultimately profit the company, with little interest in workers' personal pursuits and interests.

However, there's another part to the coin. Great leaders aren't only compassionate on their own terms – they motivate other people to act similarly as well.

At times this requires nothing more than simply and directly communicating the significance of compassion in the workplace.

Jeff Weiner the CEO of LinkedIn truly wrote an essay on the subject titled "Leading Compassionately". He described that compassionate leadership was one of his main goals in directing the company. But, he also openly confessed just how difficult this task was.

Weiner's right. As we have discovered in these chapters, compassion is not so easy to accomplish as one might first think. It can't only be desired; you need to detect when a person is suffering. You need to be able to read emotions well and feel empathy for the person that is suffering. Also, on top of that, you need to take suitable and compassionate action to assist the person in need.

It is by example, and by the clear communication of these vital principles through your leadership, that you as well as your company will become successful, productive, and compassionate.

Awakening Compassion at Work by Monica C. Worline, Jane E. Dutton Book Review

Compassion as a principle of company management enhances company performances and nurtures innovation. Also, it forms more fulfilling and pleasant workplaces, the advantages of which can be seen by workers and company leaders alike. Nevertheless, compassionate workplaces have lesser worker turnover rates. But, compassion does, need a specific amount of attention and investment, and awareness of usual patterns that people fall under while at work.

Think about compassion in the workplace.

At times, in the heat of the moment, it is difficult to be compassionate. If you frequently take time – even only an hour every week – to reflect on what could be done so as to make your workplace more compassionate, you'll get better outcomes.

Say you're a manager, think of the last leader you met whose compassion motivated you. Did you do anything to imitate that person?

Or, say you are a worker, question yourself if you can recall any communications where you failed to behave with compassion. Was this absence of compassion related to a pattern or culture within your company? What can you do to transform this?

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