All I want for Christmas?

Friday 16th December 2016

As you contemplate the end (or is it the beginning?) of the Christmas shopping, perhaps its worth taking time to think about what you are really hoping for in the coming year.

What do you really want from your work?

A new boss? A new job? Or maybe a new organisation...Apparently up to 40% people are planning to change jobs next year, and 75% of us would be open to the idea - Research by Hogan suggests that a third of leaders will end up failing and either leave, be asked to leave (or "kicked sideways") to a new role).

The dilemma we face seems to depend on our perspective.

From an organisational point of view, we often see the problem as to do with the individual, not the organisation. And if our diagnosis is a personal or individual one, then so is our solution. We apply a 'fire and hire' fix - basically to change the individual. But what if the problem is actually organisational, or systemic after all - more to do with the way the work is organised, or the culture itself? Then the individual change won't make a big difference - the same dynamics will show up in the new person, because the problem was less about the person than we might have realised.

On the other hand, from an individual point of view, we tend to think the problem is not individual at all (it's not about me, really, its them!) and so we look for a solution in a new organisation. At least I won't have to deal with that person, that boss, that department again, we tell ourselves... and lo and behold, in the new organisation, after a while, the same pattern emerges. Because it turns out that we, as individuals, are contributing more to our own frustration and disappointment (and stress) at work than we might have realised.

So what to do about this, as we have a few days off over the festive period, and before we head back to the same set of dynamics in the new year?

Perhaps, as leaders, we need to take a step back and consider that, at work at least, "much that seems personal isn't personal at all" (this idea underpins much of the work of Power and Systems by Barry Oshry). We therefore need a deeper understanding of organisations, to see more clearly what is really going on.

Conversely, as individuals, perhaps we need to consider "what if the problem really is more to do with me?" Painful though this first step might be, it actually opens up more possibilities for us. After all, it's easier (but not easy!) for me to change my behaviour and approach, than that of the whole organisation.

4 questions we ask before deciding to join (or stay)

(from Kay and Pfau, 2002)

Is this a winning organization I can be proud of?

Employees want to be proud of the organization they work for. They want to work for a successful, high-performing company and for leaders with a blend of competence, integrity and vision.

Can I maximize my performance on the job?

Virtually all employees want to be able to do a good job. That means working in an environment that will make the most of their skills and which provides the resources, information, authority and training necessary to perform at their best.

Are people treated well economically and interpersonally?

People want to work in an inclusive environment where they are respected, valued and treated fairly. They want their opinions to count, and they want their contributions recognized and rewarded both financially and psychologically.

"Is the work itself fulfilling and enjoyable?"

Everyone wants to enjoy the work they do and the people with whom they work. They also want to derive a sense of meaning and purpose from what they do every day.

And so, when the organisation thinks more systemically, and the individually thinks more personally, isn't there more hope for a better future?

and surely that's what Christmas is all about!

With best wishes for a peaceful, happy, restful and enjoyable Christmas....

and for a more hopeful, more connected, more integrated, more happy New Year!

ends....