

Leader Ship

# Creating a productive workplace

Depression is often accompanied by anxiety and met with indifference. Where does that apathy to another humans suffering come from and why does it persist? The socialisation of men, the nature of the work place, our own views on being a team player, and the relentless nature of 24/7, always on, shiny happy people as seen on Instagram, Snap Chat and Facebook, all contribute to human apathy about depression. It's said by some that depression is the second biggest illness in the world. Estimates have the world-wide numbers at approximately one in four to one in five people suffering a depressive condition at some point and by that I'm not talking about being sad. Depression is for many like me an eternal long-suffering, not temporary sadness.

So imagine if your workforce all operated at a peak level for just one day? The results would be extraordinary. That maybe fanciful. Ok so reality is the opposite . Some 25% of your workforce may at this point be suffering a depressive condition. They feel tired, that's the first thing you should know. They are struggling emotionally under the demands of work, and are putting on a brave face. They may even be some of your most loyal and productive staff. The get up, dress up and show up everyday. Sometimes though, you may notice unexpected days off, or at office drinks, they may hit the booze pretty hard and you put it down to a "tough week".

My question is, do you know who they are? If you can identify them do you care?  
I mean really? - It is not just the fact that sufferers of depression mask the condition and carry on regardless, but they carry on dysfunctionally. I always wanted to know what that meant? Dysfunction is to function in pain.

Some 25% of your work place is functioning in pain. That in and of itself should give the most hardened of bosses, execs, supervisors and management, cause to pause. I would suggest "pausing" however noble, is not enough. I could never be accused at work of having the welfare of our staff at the top of my list . I am the poorer for it and not proud of it.

I accurately repeated the way I treated by others. Not all but some and when you are in an environment whose sole purpose is the hit the numbers, the casualties are silent and many. I absolved myself of my indifference to the suffering others by consoling myself that I was suffering too, and because I knew about my condition and I carried on at work, I expected others to do the same.

Sometimes I would say to myself about the staff, "don't they know we all need them to pull together and make this place successful??"

There are so many management flaws in that statement I don't know where to begin. For many and this is true, there is no fucking "bigger picture". The only picture the staff cared about was the picture of their family pinned on a partition or sitting in a frame on a desk. That was their bigger picture, it was a small and the most important one. Many places I worked at, failed to see this "little picture" and tried in vain to get us all to buy into the greater good. The "greater fucking good??"

Many staff I worked with knew who's good it was for and it wasn't them. They saw the distance between themselves and bosses as a vast one, and the notion of "we are all in this together" was repugnant. That is however, a bit naive because everyone wants yearly pay rises, and the game we all bought into was that if the firm was successful and hit the numbers we promised the "disappointment committee" then either a one off bonus or performance increase was more likely.

What some people seem to ignore is that no matter who you meet in business, no matter how close your relationship, and no matter how long you have worked together, there is a dollar note between you and that person. The basis of your connection is commercial. As Hal Holbrook said in the movie *Wall St* "The thing about money Bud.. it makes people do things they don't wanna do" .. I'm paraphrasing and thanks Oliver Stone, who's father was a broker for that wonderful take on the aphorisms of morality.

I'm sure that many staff thought that being in management was all eating quail and champagne. - Never had quail. What they are not privy to, is the fact that while some of them could go home at an unreasonable hour and turn off, our phones were never off, and our emails pinged even while we slept especially if the tide had turned on our fortunes and we were well under water on our budgets. I found it a pressure that never left nor one I fully understood until I was put on garden leave in 2008.

There's no doubt that had I been healthy mentally that I would of eaten this pressure for breakfast, but alas I must confess at times it ate me. I should not feel uncomfortable about that admission but I do, and therein lies a problem. Why on earth should I feel guilty to admitting I felt the pressure of making money for people I didn't really like, in a company I didn't own, with staff who didn't like me, off the back of consumers I'd never meet? Hmm sobering at a time I was rarely sober.

Of all the millions of words written about leadership, teams, goals and visions no where could I find myself. My real self, not the one I took to work, and sometimes work was taking me. I honestly could arrive at work and not remember how I got there. It was habit, it was mechanical, it was expected, and I totally bought into my daily mantra, get up, dress up, show up. If I had dressed the way I felt, I may have been told to go home and come properly attired.

One day I had such a request. We were pitching to retain a piece of business. This business wasn't big but it was prestigious. Our office had a run of outs and needed a win even if was only an "incumbent" win. Saving an existing account is sometimes better than winning a new one. It meant that people would not lose jobs.

The advertising agency business is governed by some immutable laws. The law of "losing accounts means losing jobs" is one of those laws. There are few times when the people working on the account that leaves can be retained. These businesses are run thin. No excess.

In fact there were days where the need to stay in bed exhausted was so fierce, it was not "letting the team down" that dragged me into a shower and put me on the road. Obligation can be a dreadful thing. What was I obligated to? I certainly wasn't obligated to myself, if I were I would have sought care.

Depression makes you physically feel heavy, lonely and small. I would pride myself on sheer will to get the job done. In fact expression job done was another plank in support of the goals of the company.

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