

Be the Leader Your Team Needs – How to Create an Environment of Investment

One of the key differentiators in today's work world is environment. It's a common topic covered during the interview process. People want to work at a place they enjoy.

The ultimate challenge for leaders continues to be creating an environment where people arrive every day with anticipation of what could be, should be, and will be while making a difference and having fun.

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Most people in leadership roles today don't get it. They solely focus on the bottom line while forgetting that they are working with actual people – not robots.

What if leaders focused on the bottom line AND focused on building an engaging, enticing environment for their employees?

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I have asked many leaders what keeps them from building an irresistible environment and have received my fair share of excuses – “It's too hard. I'm not that creative. I don't have time. What would my peers think?” are just a few. The funny thing is that it isn't that hard.

I'll be honest; I have written my fair share of training material and each time I ask myself if my team and/or audience will find it valuable. The fact is that when you spend time investing in your team's development they appreciate the gift they are receiving. They recognize it takes time, thought, preparation, and a smidgen of risk.

The majority of your employees will not come up and thank you right away, but if you consistently dialogue with them over time probing for application, they will admit its value and

you will see it payoff in their performance. Do you remember when you finally realized how smart your parents were? It happened over time and even when things started to take shape, I doubt anyone went and told them how amazing their wisdom was – I didn't. People want investment. If you were to take a sample of employees out of an environment of investment and another out of an average environment, you would find that the "invested sample" would be far more interested, engaging and productive. Why? They are being fed and grown. Steve Farber's book, Greater Than Yourself, beautifully illustrates the idea of investment. I highly recommend reading it. Investment is worth the time because if you, Johnny Leader, are continuing your own personal growth and development, you should have more than enough topics and ideas to teach. So, it all comes back to you. Are you learning and growing? If so, start finding a way to deliver those lessons back to your crew in a simple, easy-to-apply way. It's scary and stretching, but they need your knowledge and experiences to aid in their growth.

Extreme leaders do this – average ones don't.

If you aren't growing with purpose then you need to start, because that's the reason why your turnover is so high, and your employee satisfaction is in the toilet.

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You can only bribe them so long to give you the highest marks on your performance evaluation before the truth comes out, and you start stuttering to your boss in defense like Porky Pig. Make investment in your team a priority and be the leader they want to follow.