

Viral 'letter from the boss' ought to be returned to sender

Stress often leads to anger, which is probably why many businesspeople seem irritable these days. Entrepreneurs have always complained that the government taxes the heck out of them and imposes regulatory burdens while they grind away trying to make an honest profit. But in hard times, the dreadful chorus escalates.

Along with sustained business woes, often come simplistic solutions and even name calling. Business leaders need to make the use of all their resources during stressful times, especially human resources which are, in most cases, the most expensive ones. But not every business owner, apparently, is managing to stay calm enough to do so.

A case in point is a "Letter from the Boss" I received in my email recently that has gone viral. I was suspicious immediately when I read the line, "A real letter from a real CEO." It might be a fabrication and I would write it off as the ranting of a crank if a Google search did not reveal that 173,000 websites have reprinted it along with enthusiastic huzzahs. Clearly, the words speak to many.

'Employees don't want privileges; for the most part, they want involvement.'

Whoever wrote the letter says he's an entrepreneur, lives in a big house, drives a Mercedes, and says he built his business through sacrifice and long hours. He protests that there is a "back story" behind that house and car, and writes, "While you physically arrive at the office at 9 a.m., mentally check in at about noon, and then leave at 5 p.m., I don't. There is no 'off' button for me. When you leave the office, you are done and you have the weekend all to yourself. I unfortunately do not have the freedom. I eat, ****, and breathe this company every minute of the day."

To me, the letter typifies the weary old saying, "The beatings will continue until morale improves." Whether from a "real CEO" or not, I can understand how a person who has worked and sacrificed to build a business would be impatient when he detects an entitlement mentality of people who expect to be given what he's worked so hard for.

On the other hand, getting angry and impatient with your own employees is the least effective thing you can do, especially when the biggest problem you perceive — in this case, the government — is outside your company's walls.

Let's take a look inside those walls where every business leader has the most control. For some time, research by the Corporate Leadership Council has shown that many of America's most valuable workers can't wait to leave the company they work for and are striving to do so, while the least productive work-



Perspective on People

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ers are hanging on for dear life. In both cases, these employees are not fully engaged and do not feel they play a meaningful part in decisions that affect their

work.


If you're an entrepreneur and you find yourself getting angry with your employees, try engaging them as partners in growing the business instead. Employees don't want privileges; for the most part, they want involvement. They may not believe your sincerity at first, but if you persist in pinpointing areas where you need them to solve problems and improve productivity, give them the tools required (time, training, facilitation), then thank them when they do so,

they could very well surprise you. Your employees will likely never work as hard or sacrifice as much as you do, but most people, especially in hard economic times, want to be on a winning team and will gladly help you make it so if you provide the right support.

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