

Debugging Leadership in the Workplace

Corry Robertson



Leaders are part of a global force where the speed of innovation is turbocharged and the competition for talent brings an unrelenting drive to maintain success.

This means that workplaces demand that employees are equally unrelenting in their drive for success and so they must bring high-performance energy to their workday, every day.

What does being driven and unrelenting in the pursuit of success look like at an employee level?

Long hours that cross personal boundaries into evenings, weekends, holidays, parental leave and even sick days. Or worse – no sick days at all when coming in to work sick is expected.

Why? Because there is a shared belief that companies who don't work like that will fail.

In driven businesses, there is often tribal pressure among employees to be committed, to prove to each other that they are smart enough and strong enough to be there.

To be among the super-elite of the industry these are the expectations and with them come the unspoken credo that those who want a sense of 'work-life balance' should find a kinder and gentler industry.

And so, a work culture is born.

What unique risk does this create for leaders?

What do you get from a culture that is so intensely focused on an outcome and where the work ethic dictates that the only thing that matters is great results at high speed?

You get a kind of blindness that causes you to overlook or ignore emerging workplace issues and problems.

Leaders and employees alike overlook the symptoms that lead up to certain downfall. Everyone feels the toxic effects, everyone knows it is slowing down the pace of work but no one even dares to raise an issue for discussion.

A 'just suck it up, buttercup' attitude prevails and from here, problems and issues get stepped around until they become toxic leading to disengagement and burnout.

This is where the dominos begin to fall because the best people leave the company. Other talent burns out, slowly disengages but stays on.

Employee turnover and disengagement produce a total '180' from the work culture dynamics needed by leaders to create the results that they are driving for.

So what is the solution? Psychological Safety

Build a work culture where conversations and discussions are key to the way the workplace functions.

Carve out time for the difficult conversations to emerge.

Honour the kind of bravery it takes to say what needs to be said and then reward those who show the courage to trust you.

Ahh, but I can hear your thoughts now. I bet you're thinking, "Corry, you just lost me there. We don't have time for all of that soft stuff".

But hang on a minute and hear me out.

How much time and money will it cost you if you create a toxic work culture, and then have to clean up the mess, start over and do the thing right the second time around?

How much intense stress and painful aggravation will you experience when you rely on tunnel vision and shortcuts?

Why not choose to build your work culture right the first time, create great team dynamics, be more innovative, keep the clients coming back, and have a blast to boot?

You'll have a competitive advantage because you are inventing new ways of being, finding the fastest and best ways of making life easier and employee engagement and retention will skyrocket.

So what kind of leadership style supports psychological safety in the workplace?

Coaching.

Coaching conversations are the fastest and most effective approach for leaders and their teams because coaching done well brings powerful solutions that match the speed of the work day.

Does it take a bit of time to learn how to communicate like a coach?

Yes it does, but coaching is the software that makes the hardware work and once you experience its benefits you will never go back.

Think of the tools you would never do without today.... like the internet.

Coaching is to leadership as the internet is to technology.

Can you build a great work culture in a fast paced, dynamic industry that is constantly reinventing itself by using traditional leadership methods?

No. Just plain no.

Let's get this done right the first time, why don't we?