

THE HUMAN JUNGLE

Taming the monster

It's true: the world we live in is complicated! Some of the global challenges we face – population growth, climate change and political differences – are of course complicated. What with staying competitive, dealing with financing, coping with technology advancements and keeping abreast of laws and regulations, business owners often feeling that they are attempting to tame an unmanageable 'monster'.

This is the monster that nobody actually sees, but everyone blames for loss of customers, fall in profits, low staff morale and poor management decisions. However, it doesn't need to be like this – often the best way to tame the monster is to have sound and simple solutions, based on clear values and principles that everyone in the organisation can follow.

In his book *Management in 10 Words* Terry Leahy, ex CEO of Tesco, articulates with ease how just 10 key words can transform an organisation. Here's an example of how just focusing on three or four had a profound effect on one organisation.

I was recently engaged by an organisation to assist in ascertaining the level of employee engagement within the business. Once the results were in I was asked to support the leadership team in developing a strategic plan to help them to improve engagement across the organisation – improved employee engagement increases productivity and customer satisfaction, and adds to the bottom line.

The data was gathered and then came the crunch moment when I delivered the

feedback to the CEO. We sat together for just over two hours while I coached him through the feedback (some of which he strongly denied as being just untrue). However, at the end of our session the CEO sat in silence for what seemed like ten minutes and then said: "This feedback must be true as it's come from our employees, many of whom have been here for years. But I can't believe some of the things you have told me. I also can't believe that no one has been brave enough to tell me these things before."

Leahy in his books speaks of *truth*, *courage* and *trust* as being just three of those key management words.

The truth in respect of low levels of employee engagement and consequently the organisation's performance were difficult for this CEO to accept, as he was genuinely passionate about his business and his people. But one thing was clear: he was taking only a one-dimensional view – his own! Also apparent was that no one (including the leadership team) had the courage to raise any of the concerns and have honest conversations, as they were all too busy doing their day jobs.

The current economic climate does not provide for the luxury of carrying dissatisfied passengers, so whether your organisation employs four or 4,000, tame your monster: invite and embrace the truth, whether that be underperforming teams, or poor or rushed management decisions, and stick to sound, simple solutions, and be brave and have some honest conversations.

(As for the organisation I worked with,



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what eventually become very clear to the CEO and his team was that what had got them to where they were, was highly unlikely to get them to where they needed to be. So we worked to put in place some simple, fundamental steps to bring about the changes required. This started with role modelling right at the top!