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Unlocking Success

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WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THE FUN?

How the business environment continues to change

This season for corporate leaders is unlike any before. The Internet has accelerated everything, internationalized the marketplace and propelled companies large and small into national and international arenas with their products



and services. There are unprecedented opportunities to study, live and work overseas. The number of successful new business start-ups is at an all-time high. It's an incredible time, really, vastly different from any the business world has ever known.

So, why am I often hearing this refrain — "*It's just not as much fun anymore*" — especially from CEOs and their direct reports?

There are reasons aplenty: increased governance and regulatory agency oversight, more regulations, heightened

scrutiny, documentation, audits, checks, and double-checks. There are outside advisers to ensure we don't make mistakes, because inadvertently doing the wrong thing can be costly, litigious and damaging to our reputation. A mistake or even a rumor can ruin a brand and end careers at lightning speed.

Systems to protect us from doing the wrong thing add cost, administrative burden and nonvalue-added work. Lawyers, lawyers and more lawyers are needed. And amid all of this "more" is the fact that most corporate CEOs are running leaner and doing more with less.

So, no surprise to hear from all levels — "*It's just not as much fun anymore.*"

But every challenge is an opportunity in disguise. If ever there was a time for outstanding leaders — either seasoned veterans or those on their way up — to make their mark, it is now. Companies can't hire enough high-performance can-do leaders who bring energy, optimism and a flexible work style to the workplace. Companies are discovering the need for leaders who sign on to personal accountability and who can inspire.

Providing a compelling vision and an engaging work environment is more than the right thing to do — it's crucial to help offset the unavoidable "un-fun" parts of today's work

that so many live with daily.

So, what does such leadership that is personally accountable and truly inspiring really look like? Our own benchmarking might surprise you. Three qualities emerged above others in our research on what employees want from leaders today:

■ **Leaders who will hold employees accountable.**

They need to be willing to have the tough discussions when needed, while being generous with praise and recognition when it is deserved. They want to keep score, know the score and have the chance to share in the upside benefits that come with high performance.

■ **Leaders who are open, listen and consider innovative ways of getting the work done.**

The emerging work force is very tech-savvy and can see a shorter distance between two points than their bosses can. Employees want leaders who tackle reality head-on, reinvent where necessary, and commit to growth and innovation even when it requires significant change in "how we have done things in the past."

■ **Leaders who provide stretch opportunities.**

Employees want the chance to prove themselves, and the current business challenges, by their very nature, will afford plenty of opportunity to separate the wheat from the chaff. Employees don't want to hear about the ceiling; they want to be given challenging work along with the mentoring and feedback to realize success.

Companies that succeed in these challenging yet exciting times have leaders who are sensitive to valuing and inspiring their work force and balancing the "un-fun" parts of work with workplace challenge and strong performance management. These leaders recognize and engage differently — because they know the role they play in offsetting the natural challenges the company or industry may be facing. They engage in the right leadership behaviors that are under their control, because they know it matters.

Are you that leader? <<



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