How To Widen The Gap Between Your Compensation Versus Your Value

Never Get Laid Off, No Matter What The Economy Is Doing.

by

The Strategist
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I recently sat at breakfast with a few cohorts, a group of invitees initiated by my friend Glynne Johnston, who coined the group's name, "Young Guns". I was the first invited, so the moniker came later as the average age kept lowering. We meet once a month at a café in Fort Worth that's been there forever. You probably have one like it in your city, the walls covered with glossy photos of movie stars and sports legends and the menu hasn't changed since before WWII. We discuss business, finance and other lofty and deep subjects, as is everyone else. All at the table with the exception of one bank VP are the Principals of their business.

As we talk about our lives and our businesses, we discovered that we all have clients, companies and customers who are struggling right now as well as those who are experiencing growth.

We noted that economic volatility often reveals character, the behaviors that people tend to have within themselves. The stress that the economy is going through can actually be healthy, because it reveals and makes us re-examine our flawed, unproductive, or non-value producing activity.

Since I am the only Management Consultant at the table they asked what I have discovered across the country that separated the successful from those who were struggling. I shared with them a list of character traits and managing styles that are common in both.

The first I noted is the difference in approach. Those that struggle allow their focus be on bad news and waiting for it all to 'turn-around'. In my mentoring and coaching programs, I have identified people who spend unproductive time watching the stock market, checking email, and generally worrying about things that are beyond their control. And of course the news media confirms their belief. Add to that, conversations and discussions that invoke fear and helplessness, i.e. "The housing market has dried up." "No one can get credit," or "Businesses have stopped spending." Of course, these are not valid statements.

On the other hand, my achieving clients and others I have met who are enjoying any level of success have a different approach. The absolute single most common denominator with this group is that they are not going it alone. They all have invested in acquiring outside expertise to be on their team, i.e. mentor, and coach, consultant, advisory board, continuing education, etc. They certainly aren't naïve to the financial calamities that are real. In fact, they watch the same news programs and read the same information as those who are struggling but with a completely different approach.

There's no denying that the economy recently had an enema and new business realities are emerging as a result, but achievers know that the fundamental principles of achievement are unchanged, and opportunities always exist. You either 'choose' to see or you don't. As Joe Martin once said, "It's not your IQ, or I have, it's your, I will, that counts."

Around the table, a few more traits were offered up that we agreed would apply to having the right approach in being a part of the more successful.

First, it is routine to think that entrepreneurs are the only ones that own their own business. But it is imperative to accept that everyone is really in business for him / herself, in one way or another. Clearly, when you own a business, you are in business for yourself; in contrast, what happens if you are an employee? How do you perceive that connection? To me, it means that you are in business for yourself. I think Tom Peters put it like, you own your own company called Me, Inc.

If you'll permit, I suggest it's like the difference between the employee mind-set and that of an independent contractor. The employee rarely, if ever, is outside the box and is in lock-step with their co-workers and peers; where as, the independent contractor has an entrepreneurial responsibility to maximize and deliver value. So, if you adopt this approach, then the question is; what can you do to deliver your assigned responsibilities with a new approach and be proactive with your talents in a way that creates maximum value? This is important because increasing your value contribution triggers your personal stock to go up. Those are the folks who never get laid off, no matter what the economy is doing.

We live in times when accepting personal responsibility is no longer the norm, because we associate ourselves with a group, don't keep score and get trophies for losing. What do you do when you find out that life keeps score and losers are cut from the team? The reality is that each of us has our own personal economy that we control and is determined more by our personal stock value than it is by the economy.

The next trait that the "Young Guns" agreed was common with the achievers that we know was that they invested time and money increasing their value. Most focus on financial value; however, the achievers that came to mind realized that financial value is the least important measure of achievement, and is only a derivative of other primary values.

As the conversation continued the same key traits seemed to stand out.
Intellectual Value: Our ability to think. To contribute ideas, analysis and logic, is essential to increased value. As I wrote above, people get sucked in to fear and helplessness, refusing to invest in themselves and increasing their value through training and coaching, which has proven to assure employment and career options.

Organizational Value: Who you know and trust remains a truism. The people that may control your employment and career options sidestep people with a less than positive approach. Investing in alliances within any organization, i.e. being willing to extend yourself and increasing the number of people who know and trust you, volunteering to work on a problem even when it's not your job, delivering more and before it's expected, (not necessarily working more hours, although that may be what it takes, but deliver what others value, not what you think is of value, etc. all create a personal portfolio of value.

In conclusion, the greater the disparity you create between your value to others (intellectual and organizational), versus what you use up (compensation), the more your services are secure, and the greater the opportunity for increased compensation and other achievement goals.

I wonder what we'll talk about next month.