

leadership instalments

Work Less, Do More

By Dan Gaynor

A S I WRITE, A CASE IS MAKING ITS WAY through the Ontario Courts that every Canadian business leader should watch carefully. Dara Fresco, a CIBC head teller has filed a \$600 million class action lawsuit against the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce for unpaid overtime. This follows a similar case in which the Supreme Court of Canada upheld an employee of Nygard International in her claim for unpaid overtime. This is a trend that is here to stay and will pick up momentum very soon.

I've been asking people wherever I meet them about their workplace experiences, and unpaid overtime comes up time and time again as one of the biggest frustrations. While some leaders position this unpaid time as evidence of ambition and commitment, the simple truth is most employees feel coerced and discouraged. The outcome is invariably low productivity and or high turnover, and both are very costly.

I approach this issue on two fronts: fairness and productivity. Fairness is one of every leaders most important obligations to his or her employees. From early childhood we are wired to respond to fairness. We feel resentful when this obligation is breached. Expecting people to work hours they are not being paid for (overtime after 40 hours as a standard) is unfair. This is not to say there will not be occasions when people should work longer hours. Seasonal demands make this normal from time to time, but when the exceptions become the norm, problems arise.

But there is another more practical reason to stay within the defined workweek – adequate rest and recreation boosts productivity. When we encourage balance we remove work as a source of personal and family conflict and restore the energy people need to do their best work. At a recent news conference Ms. Fresco, who was celebrated for her customer service record, said that she loves her job but also has a two-year-old she loves to get home to. Leaders would do well to heed her comments. Employees who love to get home can also be very dedicated at work – we should not force them to make “either/or” choices.

For other Leadership Instalments articles go to:
www.gaynorconsulting.com



Balancing stress with recovery is a well-known athletic training maxim. Jeff Galloway revolutionized his sport of distance running with this discovery. He wrote a seminal book on the subject. Galloway's book changed the way athletes around the world trained. It made even the best runners faster. His then revolutionary training principles lifted athletes to new levels of performance. We can lift our teams to the same heights by embracing the same principle.

With adequate rest and recovery, more work is done in fewer hours because people are refreshed and focused. They have more energy. Encouraging balance is not only the right thing to do, it boosts productivity.

This is where workaholic bosses get into trouble. They believe that because they live for work everyone else should as well. They may even attract an inner circle who shares their work habits. The problem arises when they expect the same of everyone else. They remain frustrated that others won't adopt their habits as productivity declines and turnover escalates. Balance and rest enhance productivity. Be aware of the way people are feeling about their workload and the way it is affecting their lives and their productivity – the two are closely connected.

Change is in the air. If more employers don't change their approach to work/life balance, the courts and lawmakers may soon force them to. We would be unwise to let it come to this. Rest builds productivity. Let's right-size our teams for the work we are asking and then encourage balance – we'll be rewarded with committed and productive employees.

For more on the fundamentals of building strong productive teams call for a workshop.

Dan Gaynor can be contacted at:
tel 403.880.1780
email dan@gaynorconsulting.com