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By Rick Boxx

Taking Time To Make A Timely Change

One day, while giving visitors a tour of his manufacturing plant, Kevin, the plant CFO, shared with us his views on timeclocks, which many companies use to track the time workers spend on the job, sometimes to the exact minute. He explained at his plant, timeclocks are no longer used, observing that in his opinion, "timeclocks can make for lazy managers."

Instead of having workers "clock in" when they start the day and "clock out" when they leave, Kevin's company chose to change the procedure to emphasize that people matter more than the process. Their managers strive to be aware of their people's timeliness, schedules and challenges well enough that timeclocks are not necessary.

They were willing to change their established routine for the sake of a bigger purpose, that being to demonstrate genuine care for every member of their team. As *Proverbs 27:23* tells us, "*Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds.*" Just as good shepherds keep a watchful eye on their flocks and are ever-vigilant to make certain their needs are met, wise leaders and managers also make every effort to address the unique circumstances their employees are facing.

You might think, "But that's not the way it is done in business. Timeclocks are a standard, traditional way of keeping record of the workers' hours, and also for ensuring they arrive and depart on time." That may be true. But I would respond, sometimes courageous leaders must be willing to dismantle routines and patterns for a greater cause. Here are some other principles from the Bible:

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Why not follow the usual practices of business? Sometimes leaders that put God and their people first must be willing to choose a different course, one that best serves the needs of their team members. *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is" (Romans 12:2).*

The best leaders are also servants. Servant leadership is not just some lofty ideal, but a practical, effective way for leading others. We find no better example than Jesus Christ, who said, *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).*

Demonstrating genuine care and concern. Periodically re-examining usual practices and being willing to change or adjust them to put the interests of people first shows your people that you value them. *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).*

Having wisdom to recognize and respond to change. It could be said that the "eight last words" of failing organizations are, "But we have always done it that way!" Discerning leaders perceive a changing environment and adapt accordingly. Such adaptability is mentioned in the Old Testament, concerning a group known as "the men of Issachar," one of the Israelite clans: *"Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do..." (1 Chronicles 12:32).* When circumstances change, sometimes that calls for a change in strategy or methodology.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Does your business or organization utilize timeclocks, at least for hourly employees? If so, has anyone ever questioned their value or effectiveness? What would be the reaction, do you think, if timeclocks were suddenly eliminated?
2. Can you think of any other standard, commonly accepted business practices that may have become outdated or might deserve being re-evaluated in terms of their effectiveness?
3. How do you react to the statement, "Timeclocks can make for lazy managers"? What do you think the plant executive meant when he said that?
4. What are some of the pros and cons of developing organizational practices and procedures that place a strong emphasis on the needs and desires of the employees?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Romans 12:9-13; Galatians 5:22-26; Ephesians 5:15-16,21; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 3:8

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