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“R” for Relief, Rest and Roses

The patron saint of lovers, St. Valentine, was as much in favor as myself of relief and rest. Roses only skid in as a paltry second best to relief and rest.

Much has been written, talked and pondered about the venerable patron saint. Much more has been spent on resuscitating his competence, or incompetence, in bringing people together, keeping them together, and ensuring that partnerships of this nature are of the lasting kind.

Maybe we should lobby the powers that be to anoint a new saint and we should call her, Saint ‘R’. She would probably place more emphasis on the relief and rest portions of her duties as an overseer of such matters.

Yes, we still send the cards, we still send roses – mostly ordered online now, and we still make last-minute mad dashes to fluffy restaurants with fluffy décor amid hastily prepared and equally hastily served fluffy dinners. That’s all very fine, but it’s still a case of the roses having a predominant place at the table.

I don’t think I have ever encountered so many people who are complaining about their lifestyles, about their overwhelming exhaustion, their seemingly complete lack of time for anything other than dashing to work, dashing home at a most unpredictable hour – usually very late, and performing myriad of helter skelter tasks at supersonic rates. And, finally being able, almost thankfully, to collapse upon a bed to somewhat rejuvenate the creaking brain, bones and body.

Surely that lifestyle must only be called by its proper name, burnout. The most tragic aspect of burnout is that too many people suffer from it, never recognize it – that is, until a major health problem raises its ugly head, and continue to spend money, effort, energy, time and substance on fluff. Of course, I fully recognize that people make choices, are entitled to make choices, and equally not to recognize the consequences of those choices.

Their work performance is surely suffering from this lifestyle. As an employer, you are suffering from this because burnt out staff are not giving you the quality performance and quality time for which you’re paying. And, you’re certainly not in the position, albeit unhappy, of being able to replace employees as is happening amongst your major competitors in Asia. Therefore, you have to find other ways, within the legal and corporate constraints under which you operate, to help first, yourself to avoid the malady, and secondly to help your employees to do the same.

The venerable saintly bow and arrow gentleman’s venerated day may be one way you can tease and whet the appetite of your employees to ignore the roses and perhaps partake of a little bit of light relief and rest for a short period. Have you ever considered

holding a sensitive Valentine's luncheon for your staff? Aside from the people who may not have a 'valentine' at a particular moment, and all the political minefields that dwell therein, the people interaction is both restful and a relief from the tedium of a day's work.

Researchers, from Stanford etc., believe that the restful flow of conversation and intermingling with colleagues one might never meet, or that one may only see on a very irregular basis, is good for both moral and productivity. Whilst I appreciate that these things take a little planning, and one cannot please everybody, it could have very real and very rewarding consequences for your company and for your employees.

There are other days and other opportunities during the year, and frankly no particular celebratory moment may be necessary, to show a small – and inexpensive – amount of gratitude to your employees.

One employer, granted in the small bracket, has a red rose placed on each employee's workstation, male and female alike, early on the morning of St. Valentine's Day. This gesture is much appreciated by everybody. He now has a standing order with his local florist and his discount is substantial.

There's a new wave of holistic candles, teas, lotions and such available for purchase at a not-too-expensive rate. Rates can be negotiated, and you're one of the best negotiators in your business, some of which purport to contain restful relief. Needless to say, I can't vouch for such assertions, but I'm in favor of letting your employees know in some way that you are in favor of their healthful collaboration in making your business a success. It's certainly a much less expensive way to avoid master-classes in the avoidance of burnout. It's not a guarantee; it's merely a small token gesture. Everyone always appreciates small token gestures. The dozen red roses arriving with a flourish from the delivery van is all very fine, but so few people actually get them without first having to cajole, badger, hint and ponder (read: sweat) over their delivery.

That's the fluff. The substance is when everybody is included and you're the welcome sight of the delivery van. Such a gesture is never a ball and chain around your neck. You cut your cloth to suit your measure. Most people always appreciate such measurements, and it's most people who matter. They carry the major burden of your success anyway. The court of public opinion awaits your defense of Saint 'R' or the roses that skid into our lives at the behest of furious marketing and furtive yearning.