

Not Just A Fist In A Bucket Of Water

by Greg Ferris

A recent metaphoric expression caught my attention while reading a blog in Identity Thief. According to the blog, the expression surfaced during an exit interview. When the interviewer told the employee that employees are like a fist in the bucket; when they leave it's like a fist being pulled out of a bucket – they are replaced as fast as the space in a bucket when the fist is pulled out. In essence, anybody can be replaced quickly and quickly forgotten.

Many of us will agree that low performance does not grow a company nor secure the future. There are low performing employees who are actively disengaged in the workplace and perhaps should be considered as a fist in a bucket of water. These employees' abuse systems, disrupt interactions and often times become an obstacle to organizational effectiveness.

On the other hand, there are high performers in organizations who are very talented, understand the business model and goals, perform above expectations and model behaviors that influence others. These performers are the positive deviants; they maximize resources through creative insights - far greater than others - and produce high levels of results. The performers are not easily replaced and not forgotten.

Interesting enough, in a recent dialogue, the president of a company put it very clearly, performers must be happy and happy performers contribute to success, bottom line and happiness of the company. I responded by asking how do they get happy. His response, they just come to work that way! I wish it were that simple.

Happiness does not happen before the sun sets. And it takes more than employees entering the workplace with a smile on their face. Happiness surfaces through the language of appreciation, caring actions by managers and a culture that engages the head, heart and hands of all performers. Happiness also surfaces when companies commit to helping managers develop the skills that create a culture of happiness sustained through spaced repetition.