



by Michael Scott, MPA

Are Employees A Bad Idea?

Answers to LC Review Questions

CDMs who answer the LC Review Questions on page 19 of this issue can check their responses against the answer key found on page 38. This “self check” allows you to confirm your understanding of the test questions.

In his new book, internationally acclaimed author Chuck Blakeman, says YES...that is, unless those very employees are transformed into what he calls *stakeholders*.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Chuck Blakeman for this exclusive Leadership Connection column on the principles of his new book—which was named a Top 10 Business Book in 2013 by WealthManagement.com.

The title of your book is Employees Are ALWAYS a Bad Idea. So the obvious question is: Why are they such a bad idea? Don't we need them, particularly in a foodservice environment that's very hands on?

Sure we do. But what we really need to keep in mind is that employees were invented in the early 20th century to populate the factory system. The goal was to attract “stupid” and “lazy” people who would be extensions of machines, not people who could improve the system.

If employees are such a bad idea, then what should we have instead?

Stakeholders. In a sense, employees have been reduced to functional children who find themselves boxed into office daycare centers, and told exactly what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. They are often viewed as unable to think for themselves.

The marching orders of the traditional workplace is, get to work early, leave late, shut up, sit down, don't you dare make waves, and live invisibly. As an employee you are told when to show up, what time recess and lunch are, and exactly what you should do while you're there.

And stakeholders?

They are a whole different breed. Stakeholders are people who have survived the Industrial Age practice of being treated like children and are your independent, confident team members who are neither stupid or lazy.

But what about job descriptions and tasks?

In the employer world, we have become task-oriented to the point where employees often feel used, like cogs in a wheel or machine. Therefore, the employer-employee relationship becomes very rote. The company line becomes “come to work and

do what I tell you to do.”

How can foodservice leaders begin to shift out of this perspective?

I often pose the following question: What would it look like if you the leader and your organization were to cultivate a mindset of “what is the greatest thing we can expect of our people?” In other words, how about giving your food and nutrition team some decision-making power and responsibility? Like the freedom to innovate, question, change, or suggest a better way of doing things. Isn't that the essence of a truly empowered team?

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and nutrition team some decision-making power and responsibility? Like the freedom to innovate, question, change, or suggest a better way of doing things.

Sounds reasonable and simple. So why aren't more leaders embracing this?

Great question. Frankly, I believe that most leaders don't see the need to change because the current model they're using has been successful for them and they're comfortably on budget and profitable. So the culture becomes, “forget the people at the bottom. We'll keep 'em as long as they do what we tell them to do.”

Sounds like you're saying that talented people simply won't put up with the current Industrial Age Model anymore?

You got it! We've entered the Participation Age, which embraces sharing. Today, people simply won't put up with being treated

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For more information about Chuck Blakeman and his new book, visit www.whyemployeesarealwaysabadidea.com

like children, locked down to a daily 9 to 5 in the workplace daycare center, and told exactly what to do. They'll simply move elsewhere.

What's one thing you can leave us with in terms of the quest to build a successful participation age company?

That people want to make meaning, and not just money for the organization. Stakeholders are everywhere. In fact, a lot of people you think are employees want to be stakeholders. They are yearning to take your food and nutrition services efforts and run it while you execute a larger strategic vision for the department. ☺

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