

What's Entropy Costing You?

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As I've written elsewhere, the universe has certain inviolable laws. One of those laws is entropy, the way that things left to themselves naturally deteriorate. We can pretend that these principles don't apply to our team or organization, "not us." We can ignore the clear evidence, "what problems?" Or we can open our eyes to the reality of this foe, face it squarely and create clear strategies to work against its influence.

We often are unwilling to address chronic problems in our environments until the pain speaks louder. When it hurts enough, we do something to alleviate the pain. When it doesn't hurt badly enough, we tend to do nothing. This is the core problem with chronic pain versus acute. We can deal with low grade pain in our bodies for years by coping in various ways, never addressing the root cause. However, when the pain becomes acute, we are forced by that pain to seek answers. I've never much liked going to the doctor, but when it hurts enough or I'm scared that something might seriously be wrong, I'll go.

Where's your pain level in your organization?

The Fiscal Cost

Most organizations are intently focused on hard costs and the bottom line. When it hits us in the balance sheet, we begin to take notice. This first aspect of the pain that I suspect is in many organizations is fiscal. Let's think through a typical corporate scenario. This could be your business. We would all agree that happy employees do a better job.

Customers are better served. Retention goes up. Customer loyalty is increased. The inverse is also true. Unhappy, disgruntled employees affect customer experience, retention, and revenue. How's your team doing in these ways? It has been estimated that the average organization spends 2.8 hours per week dealing with internal team-related interpersonal conflict. It has further been noted that only 30 percent of America's employees are fully engaged, that 40 percent are partially engaged / disengaged and that the lowest 30 percent are actively disengaged. The reasons for that disengagement are myriad. Many team members feel underappreciated, unacknowledged, or mistreated. Their response to their experience is lowered engagement. Some of the pain around you may be evident in the way that disengagement, turnover, conflict and other facets of entropy is affecting your bottom line. Fiscal pain hurts.

The Personal Cost

The hard costs are bad enough. What about the personal cost to you as the leader of your organization or team? Sometimes it is this level of pain, personal pain, that needs to be highlighted to move us toward action. Think about the impact of your business, your team, those dynamics at the office on you as a person and ask the following questions:

- How's your sleep pattern? Are you getting the rest you need? Any trouble with falling asleep, staying asleep, getting REM sleep when you do? How are these connected to your work life?
- How's your health in general? Any ongoing health concerns that seem to be related to work? How's your blood pressure?
- How's your emotional health? Any diagnosed or undiagnosed struggles with depression, burnout, anxiety?
- How's your stress level? How long is your fuse?
- Any unhealthy coping strategies in play? Do you "need"

a drink at the end of the workday to cope? Are you using food as a way to make you feel better about life? Other unhealthy coping methods?

- How's your relational life? Are any of your most important relationships suffering due to your experiences at work?
- • How's your spiritual life? Feeling disconnected from the bigger picture and deeper meaning in part as a result of what's happening in your work life?

So, let me ask the question again. What is entropy costing you as an organization and even more importantly, as a person? How bad does the pain have to get for you to take action and begin to counteract this deteriorating force in your life? I'd love to talk to you about ways to move yourself and those you lead away from these costly realities. Is the pain "bad enough" yet? If so, let's talk.