

Production vs. Connection The Ailment And The Cure

Recently, I had what we like to call an “aha moment” while listening to a sermon one Sunday. The minister made the observation that our society as a whole has swung to the extreme side of productivity at the expense of our connections. It hit me that this is one of the greatest ailments we see as coaches with our member companies and leaders, especially as of late.

Culture → Appreciation → Connection

We know the best-performing companies are those that devote significant effort to creating a culture that their team members want to be a part of. And where does that culture come from? People crave appreciation in the workplace – and we’re talking sincere, heartfelt appreciation, not the casual “pat on the back” or quick “thanks” in passing. Real appreciation only occurs if there is a real connection between people. Connection is valuing the other person more than yourself or having an “others first” mindset. It takes effort, vulnerability and emotion. True culture cannot exist without both of these key elements.

The Ailment

Unfortunately, in our “all about me” culture, connections tend to be shallow and unemotional. It’s not what can I do for you, it’s what can you do for me. As a society and in business, we have become so laser-focused on overachievement and beating the competition that our connections receive little attention. Especially today, when companies are striving to get back on their feet, push out new offerings and make up for lost time from the pandemic, connections are starving due to the demands of winning.

But At What Cost?

There have never been higher instances of job discontentment, disconnected families, depression, suicide and overall lack of joy. Our extreme focus on production and achievement has come at a huge cost to society. Extremes at either end of the pendulum never end well.

So, Now What?

Back to our coaching perspective, I think we have it right when we help our companies focus on culture by viewing their team members as human beings and not just a means to productivity. In addition, we all know that you cannot truly separate the business side from the personal side and that you have to be equally intentional in both areas to create the life you want, which involves real connections to who and what we love.

It’s time to swing the pendulum back, ease off the production pedal and give more attention to treating each other with compassion and putting others first. It may seem strange, but the companies that have done this well typically outperform on the production side, too, because connection is a great motivator for betterment – both personally and professionally.

Gee, maybe there’s really something to the old Golden Rule thing.

You NEVER See It Coming!

But Once It Hits, Everyone Says, “I wish I would have...”

A year ago, no one could have predicted that countless businesses would shift to a remote work model. The pandemic hit hard and fast, and small businesses had to think on their toes. Many had only a few weeks to adapt. It was stressful and extremely challenging.

Looking back on it, many SMBs wish they'd had a plan in place that would have made things easier. When the pandemic hit in February/March 2020, SMBs had to absorb the huge cost of getting their employees up and running off-site. Not only was it costly, but it also took a lot of coordination and on-the-fly planning. This meant things slipped through the cracks, including cyber security.

As they say, hindsight is 20/20. You may wish you had a plan in place or had more time, but you didn't. A vast majority didn't. However, you can still plan for the future! While you never know when disaster is going to strike, you CAN be prepared for it. Whether that disaster is a pandemic, flood, fire or even hardware failure, there are steps you can implement today that will put you in a better place tomorrow. Here's how to get started.

Put Your Plan Into Writing.

First and foremost, you should have a standard operating procedure to call on should something go wrong. For example, in early 2020, many SMBs didn't have a security plan in place, let alone a remote work security plan. They had to make it up as they went, which just added to the challenges they were already experiencing.

To get over this challenge, work with an experienced IT services company or managed services provider (MSP) to put together a plan. This plan should include a cyber security protocol. It should define what malware software employees should be using, what number they should call for 24/7 support, who to contact when they receive suspicious emails, how to identify suspicious e-mails and so on.

More than that, it should outline exactly what needs to happen when disaster strikes. Pandemic? Here's how we operate. Fire? Here's what you need to know. Hardware failure? Call this number immediately. The list goes on, and it can be pretty extensive. This, again, is why it's so important to work with an MSP. They've already put together plans for other SMBs, and they know where to start when they customize a plan with you.

Invest In Security And Backups.

While every business should have network security already in place, the reality is that many don't. There are a ton of reasons why (cost concerns, lack of time, lack of resources, etc.), but those reasons why aren't going to stop a cyber-attack. Hackers don't care that you didn't have time to put malware protection on your PCs; they just want money and to wreak havoc.

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When you have IT security in place, including fire-wall protection, malware software, strong passwords and a company-wide IT security policy, you put your business and all your employees in a much better place. **All of this** should be in place for both on-site employees and remote workers. With more people working from home going into 2021, having reliable IT security in place is more important than ever before.

On top of that, you should have secure backups in place. Investing in cloud storage is a great way to go. That way, if anything happens on-site or to your primary data storage, you have backups you can rely on to restore lost or inaccessible data. Plus, having a solid cloud storage option gives remote employees ready access to any data they might need while at home or on the go.

Where Do You Begin?

Some SMBs have the time, money and resources to invest in on-site IT personnel, but most don't. It is a big investment. This is where partnering with an experienced IT services firm can really pay off. You may have employees in-office or you may have a team working remotely – or you may have a mix of both. You need support that can take care of everyone in your organization while taking care of the data security of the business itself. This is where your IT partner comes into play. They are someone you can rely on 24/7 and someone who will be there for you during a pandemic or any other disaster.



Confidence Is Key: How To Self-Promote For Greater Success

We often don't like to talk about ourselves. But there are many times when it is important to talk about yourself and to convey your accomplishments. Maybe you're applying for a new position within your organization, you're trying to establish a partnership with another company or you want to expand your professional network. Either way, here are a few ways to self-promote without sounding like a brag.

Lean Into Your Expertise.

Call on your experience. If someone is dealing with an issue you're familiar with, walk them through it. Or, take on the role of mentor with others in your organization or community.

Be Receptive To Feedback.

This is how we grow. Listen to what people have to say and respond by taking action. Make adjustments as they make sense. When you receive positive feedback, accept it graciously.

Emphasize "Together."

Don't make things just about you. Share credit when it deserves to be shared. Be a supportive and motivational voice. Uplift others.

- Forbes, Nov. 23, 2020

3 Ways To Protect Your Data During COVID-19

1. Manage Your Passwords.

You've heard it before, and you'll hear it again – one of the best ways to keep intruders out of your data is to lock it behind strong passwords that are updated every 60 to 90 days. Use passwords that are a mix of letters, numbers and special characters. Make passwords long and confusing.

2. Secure All Data.

Who are you sharing your data with? Do former employees still have access? What about former clients? Take time to see who has permission to access your network and data. While you're at it, clean up old or useless data that may be just taking up space.

3. Adopt Best Practices.

When was the last time your team received IT security training? Never? Five years ago? It's time to get back on it. Train your team on the latest cyber security threats and how to handle them. Then, adopt best practices so your team knows what to do when they receive a phishing e-mail or there's a threat to your network.

- Inc., Nov. 20, 2020

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Here's Why You Need More Than A Firewall In 2021:

In 2020, there were **4,000 confirmed data breaches**: that's **333** breaches per month, **77** breaches per week, and **11** breaches per day. This doubled the number of breaches in 2019. According to Cybersecurity Ventures, by the end of 2021, a business will fall victim to ransomware **every 11 seconds. This stuff is no joke.** It's not "if" it will happen to your business, but "when." Really, what I'm trying to say is that your business needs the proper protocols and security to stay safe and keep up and running. **We are offering a discount on ThreatLocker, which is the best way to secure your network.** ThreatLocker is a zero-trust security solution and the most powerful tool in helping you combat today's cyber threats.



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