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Alpha Business Coaching Newsletter

Being Indispensable

Dear Small Business Owner:

In this month's newsletter, I'd like to speak to employees (and owners) about becoming indispensable in their companies. In his new book, *Linchpin*, Seth Godin brings up a progressive idea about how we can become more valuable at work.

When we say that work might be hard, we generally accept that it might require us to do something tiring or cause us fatigue. But, we usually hesitate to invest a more important sort of labor into our paid work that really matters—emotional labor. What is emotional labor? It's investing our energies in doing some of the difficult, not-on-auto-pilot type of connecting with our jobs. It's when we confront a fear of working with a difficult co-worker, or deal with a messy situation, or learn how to better our communication, or try to overcome our distrust of someone.



Ironically, we do many of these "growing" acts for free outside of work. Then when we get to work, we want to just do the minimum, the basics, just what we're told to do. What would happen if you brought that to work? The act of giving someone a smile, of connecting to another human, of taking initiative, of being surprising, of being creative, of putting on a show, what would happen if we did this at work?

You may think, well, what will I get in return? When someone does the emotional labor, guess who benefits the most---the worker. Not the company, not the boss, but the employee. You're giving a gift; this is your reward. The essence of any real gift is that you don't do it for a tangible, guaranteed reward. If you do, it's a job. But, you will probably start to see the benefit of the response of those around you--coworkers becoming



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more open, bosses become more flexible, customers become more loyal.



Digging into the difficult work of emotional labor is exactly what we're needed to do. When we avoid it, we don't do much that will help us stand out. If we show up, unwilling to do emotional labor, it's a short-term strategy for now. Over the long-term, organizations won't pay extra for someone who merely does the easy stuff. Good companies are starting to value this sort of people-to-people labor and encourage it. More and more organizations are embracing this idea, hiring for it and rewarding it.

Can you be an organization that encourages emotional laboring and an employee that adds it to their job? I encourage you to try.

Sincerely,

Lynda Hess, Business Coach

email: lhess@alphabizcoaching.com

phone: 703-738-4634

web: <http://www.AlphaBizCoaching.com>