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The Bottom Line: Friend or Foe? (Case Study)

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The Bottom Line: Friend or Foe? (Case Study)



Gunter was reeling. The board of Mastech had brought him in as CEO to move the company forward. He had been selected not only because of his proven business skills, but because he cared about people.

Now the board was adamant: “You’re just being soft, Gunter. You care about people so much you’re not making the tough decisions. You’ll never improve the bottom line of this company unless you start swinging the axe. Get to it, or...um...the axe may fall on you!”

The directive hit Gunter right in the gut. For a year he had been trying to build a winning, productive team. Now this: do whatever it takes to boost profits! If he didn’t cut the workforce, his days with Mastech were surely numbered. But could he continue to build morale and slash personnel at the same time?

DISCUSSION

- Are the employees better off with Gunter as boss, even if he “swings the axe?”
- Can he reduce the workforce in ways that are consistent with his care for people?
- What might Gunter do to help his board understand why care for people is important?
- At what point does Gunter conclude he can no longer work for the company? What are the implications of his leaving?

REFERENCES

- For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes (Matthew 8:9).
- And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32).

BEST PRACTICES

Great leaders build productive, results-oriented teams. For them, financial performance helps define reality. It is a friend, enabling them to optimize team performance. But they never use the bottom line as a blunt instrument, ignoring the value of people. If financial results make staff reductions necessary, good leaders act creatively, always compassionate toward those who are most affected.

This case is an illustration of the biblical directive to look at an employee as a whole person at work, Leviticus 1-10. Click [here](#) to go (or return) to this passage.

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