



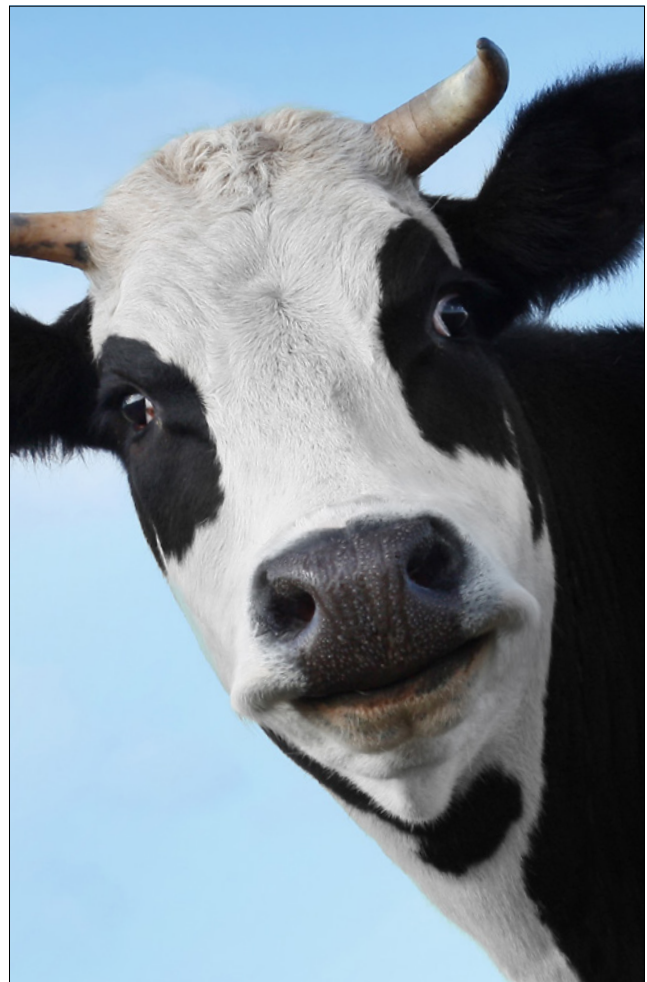
Nothing Changes *if* Nothing Changes

“**W**hat good is it if you buy a cow that produces two buckets of milk and keeps kicking one over?”

Now there is a word picture worth remembering...

I once worked with the owner of a financial consulting firm and his wife mentioned to me that he could be a bit blunt with how he talked to his secretaries. The owner was once telling me how successful and quickly growing his firm was. I took the opportunity to say, “I see that you have done quite well, but why would you want to sabotage your own success”? He looked stunned and asked what I meant and I told him; it was the way in which he had been talking to his secretaries. He told me I was right and said he would instantly make that change! He has a thriving company to this day, in part because of the change he was willing to make.

Another business owner recalled he was quickly losing engineers and was going through a season of high turnover. He told me that it finally hit him that he was squashing their creativity by repeatedly letting them know that it was either “his way or the highway.” When he realized that he was sabotaging his success by eclipsing their ideas and brilliance, he got out of the way and let them express their years of training and expertise and when he did, they stopped quitting.



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These are just two examples of how bright, well intentioned and potentially successful business owners were unravelling everything they had worked hard for because of their self-sabotaging behavior.

The common denominator between the two examples are 1) they had a behavior that was discouraging to their employees they were not initially aware of, and 2) it wasn't until they made the necessary changes that measurable improvement was made, because *nothing changes if nothing changes*.

Perhaps as you or your staff face the New Year it is becoming very clear to you and others that something in your organization or team dynamic must change.

You may have invested a lot of time, money, discussion and understanding in a specific area and yet have found that a bucket of your morale and energy keeps getting kicked over. You have loved your position and job up to this point, but you find yourself feeling like you are "so done" with this discouraging situation.

There is nothing like the New Year to recalibrate, restructure, implement a change or develop a new plan of action to stop the chaos and emerge with a stronger vision.

Here are three ideas on recalibrating the workplace environment for greater success...

Changing For Change

1 Locate the Drain

Utility companies use a "locate" protocol when they need to find underground systems such as water pipes or electrical wires. They use a special detector to help discern and locate where the problem is coming from. Until they find the concern or problem nothing improves or is repaired.

Like the cow that kept kicking the bucket over because it was in the wrong place, whatever system, practice or person is in the wrong position or place in your organization, see it for what it is and admit there

is a need for change. A problem can never be resolved unless there is an acknowledgement there is a problem to begin with.

Step one, then, is to go on a fact finding mission to assess where the drain is located.

To continue to ignore a need for change when we know there is a huge, unrelenting problem is not only the definition of insanity as they say, but highly irresponsible. Whether the concern stems from problematic behavior that is allowed to continue, poor communication



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practices, irresponsible management, outdated equipment or less-than-satisfactory customer service, locate and face the problem squarely because ***nothing changes if nothing changes.***

2 Stop the Sabotage

Sabotaging problems and behaviors automatically suggest that, in part, we do it to ourselves. In the opening examples of the two business owners, they both admitted they were actually the perpetrators of the existing trouble the company was facing.

They had to make a change ***before*** a good change with their staff occurred.

Notice above in the cow illustration that ***until the bucket is actually moved nothing gets better.***

I was working with a manager who was allowing a growing frustration in his small department because he refused to intervene between two warring staff members. He told me he thought it would eventually “blow over” and take care of itself. Since this almost never happens, I called him on his unwillingness to be pro-active as their supervisor and do something quickly to stop spreading friction among his staff.

So he actually had to ***move the bucket*** because he was losing the very teamwork he was longing to create because of their exhaustion with his lack of leadership.

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3 Recalibrate For Success

It is essential that once we locate the problem and make the necessary moves to begin addressing the issue we come up with an action plan to keep the problem from happening again so that “going forward” changes can happen.

The dairy farmer, implied above, has admitted the problem of a kicked over bucket and changed the immediate frustrations by moving the bucket to a different location. Next, perhaps he needs to come up with a more efficient way to figure out his cost between a two bucket cow and a one bucket cow. Was there any more inventive ways he could make good use of his time and/or the cow’s production of milk?

Was there any other automated equipment he could invest in that would enhance the cow’s production of milk? Does he need to go to more successful dairies and seek consultation from the industries best?

The bottom line is, what are the changes you can make to not only fix the problem but restructure or cast a new action plan for the future?

In the above example, the passive manager immediately decided that he would sit down with his two angry employees and acknowledge his lack of intervention with their problem. He then let them know that he was pursuing management training to strengthen the areas he lacked.

He also asked them to write up a personal plan that they felt would enhance their current workflow problem in the division, and solicited specific ideas from them to be put into writing on how to improve their working relationship with each other. This would be monitored by the manager every other week for three months.

Since nothing changes if nothing changes, let’s take the new year by the throat, get a second wind, and do everything we can do to make a difference in the workplace!!!!

Happy New Year!

Bill Gallagher

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Bill Gallagher has been counseling and working with professionals since 1980. His emphasis in the workplace is to help develop both relational skills and professional standards among administration and staff. He has worked in multiple organizational settings and of recent has spent most of his time addressing workplace issues in healthcare and city government.

Bill formed TeamWorks in 2001 to help organizations achieve their goals for establishing high morale and client satisfaction. TeamWorks currently specializes in offering one-on-one surveys and evaluations for management and staff to assess the current culture’s needs and recommended trainings going forward.

In addition to conducting a variety of workshops and in-services on workplace issues, Bill mediates conflict among partnerships and staff relationships, speaks at conventions, facilitates management retreats, and offers personal consultation and counseling for staff.

Bill’s strengths are in public speaking, mediation, and understanding the complexities of relational dynamics in the workplace. He lives in Medford, Oregon, with his wife Jenny, and enjoys spending time with their five children and five granddaughters.

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