

What Your Direct Reports Really Want For The Holidays

No More Fruitcakes, Please.

By Kendall C. Wright, President of Entelechy Training and Development, Inc.

The holidays are a time of joy, festivities and gift giving. Many leaders are pondering the ideal gift. They want to give their team members tokens of appreciation and to say thanks for a great effort.

So, what's your idea of the perfect gift for your associates or direct reports? For most leaders, the considerations range from a calendar for the New Year, a drawer organizer, or perhaps, a new mouse pad with the company logo. Before you peruse the catalogs or visit the websites of the mega-office supply outlets, consider another angle, even a more practical perspective.

Contrary to "corporate" tradition, office supplies don't really count as "holiday gifts." How about giving them what they really want? How about giving them something they've yearned for all year long? How about giving them a gift that impacts retention, morale and productivity? I'm not referring to a salary increase or additional vacation days. Instead of a monogrammed portfolio, most direct reports would prefer...are you ready for this... a competent leader. That's it, no more, no less. Simply put, they wish for a leader who is able to cast a compelling vision, marshal resources, hold team members accountable and create a culture of excellence.

Leadership competence is as uncommon as finding suit on the 80% markdown rack that really fits or finding someone who really looks forward to getting a fruitcake as a gift. I hear these things are possible, but not necessarily the most common of experiences. National surveys suggest that many direct reports are experiencing significant challenges around engagement, job satisfaction and communication as a result of incompetent leaders.

In the New Year, make it a priority to communicate, even broadcast, your intention to craft a culture that promotes respect and cooperation. Begin by taking the initiative to inquire about challenges currently distracting team members from making their maximum contribution. Additionally, explore how your style and approach impacts how work gets done in the department or within the team. Enhance your effectiveness by learning about any inadvertent consequences robbing the team of efficiency and profitability.

Fruitcake has a special place in the annals of gift giving, but to give a gift guaranteed to excite and catalyze your team, gift the gift of competence. No fruitcakes please.

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