

“Love in the Workplace????!!”

I was talking with a friend of mine this week and told that during February I wanted to write about love in the workplace and in the world. Her first response was “Ohana”. I said, “O what”? And of course, she repeated herself and she said in Hawaii they practice this like a love for all or a universal love. Her sister lives in Hawaii and she gave me her email address to get more information. And so I did!!

What I found out was that Ohana actually means family. And in Hawaii their organizations try to practice this concept that they are a family working together for guidance and support. The school that she works in supports this idea as does the organization where her husband works. Apparently at his work (a large hotel chain) they have weekly sessions with employees that they call “Malama” and they work with a “kahoo”, a Hawaiian minister. Malama is a way to open up and talk about problems or whatever is on the employee’s mind. This sounded like an awesome way to connect people. I’ve asked more questions about how this gets applied and if it really works and I’m waiting to hear more.

So what about love in the workplace? Should we really use that word for our working environment? I know many CEO’s cringe when you bring it up and ask you not to use the word. Why is it so scary to people as it applies to work? When I looked up love in the dictionary it talked about a deep devotion or fondness for someone. And I thought well, that would be a good thing! So, love in the workplace is really more about taking our relationships to a deeper level. We are not talking about hugging people in the hallway, but about caring more deeply, respecting more deeply, having deeper compassion for another human being. Again, sounds good to me.

In the book , Breakpoint and Beyond, George Lands talks about trust and love as a key driving force in building businesses. It’s what we need to do to connect with the people that work for us and with us. He quotes Jan Carlzon, then president of Scandinavian Airlines System, who said, “People are not willing to take risks when they feel threatened or afraid. But if you manage people by love – this is, if you show them respect and trust-they start to perform up to their real capabilities.”

So what steps can we take to bring more “love” to the workplace? Here are a couple thoughts...

1. Stephen Covey talks about seek first to understand, then to be understood. Really walk in someone else’s boots. Find out where they might be coming from. Ask more questions. Inquire about their life.
2. When you see another person just smile – the brain actually responds physically by emitting good chemicals
3. Have meetings where you engage in “dialogue” or “malama” . Invite a “kahoo” or facilitator to help people share their feelings about the workplace. Discuss how to make the workplace a better environment for the people that work there.
4. Mother Theresa said, “Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” Use more “kind” words in your day to day life.

Have a great Valentine’s Month.....do things that expand your heart and bring more love your way. You deserve it!!!