

February 2006



Getting to the Heart of the Matter

Candor strikes a winning chord in New England. I credit an ability to cut to the chase with roots in northern Maine farms and family business and two decades of international management consulting. Organizations large and small, near and far, public and private cling to romantic notions of what works. Be bold. Debunk so-called business imperatives. Restore confidence. Inspire leadership.

“Love, Love Me Do...You Know I Love You”

A client VP confides that he doubts he is a beloved leader. I am of little consolation, replying frankly: “Rest assured that they do *not* love you!” Enduring loyalty and trust are built on a sincerity that is difficult for most executives to sustain.

“Can’t Buy Me Love”

A competitor offered to acquire a family business. A lengthy due diligence ensued and employees soon learned that they were being sold out for early owner retirement. Ultimately the deal fell through. The business suffered low morale, high turnover, and stagnating sales. “We’ll sweeten the pot and win hearts back with employee stock options,” they said. I don’t think so. You can’t buy employee love. The Beatles had it right.

“My heart is sad and lonely...I long for you Dear only.”

Face facts: the romance is over. Billie Holliday would have to serenade employees in person for you to recoup that elusive and seductive lovesickness. Employees’ love of a workplace is a wonderful and worrisome thing. Affections that “feel good” may later throttle growth, choke creativity and sabotage succession plans. No more *Body and Soul* here.

“It’s fine to be a genius, of course, but keep the old horse before the cart....”

You betrayed a “WE BELIEVE” nation! One minute you seek employee input on everything from customer strategy to office décor, and the next you leave them for Broadway and those *Damn Yankees*....If you wish key management and staff to know you are caring and compassionate, then attend to your mission and grow the business – innovation, technology, talent – without which your days are numbered.

“...First You’ve Got to Have Heart”

Experts surrounded you: accountant, banker, lawyers, brokers and realtors. So how could everything go so wrong? Was your heart in the right place? Were theirs?

This Valentine’s Day, dare say what’s in your heart and demand that your associates do the same. Homemade cards pack twice the wallop of store-bought ones. Make yours sincere, timely, personal. **Here’s mine.** Dedicated to improving the quality and impact of professional service advice, I remain,



Karen S. Hinchliffe

Consulting, Educating and Inspiring
Private, Public and Not-for-profit Sector Leaders and Advisors
www.kshstrategyhouse.com
see also: www.amanofhiswords.com