Emotional Intelligence in business

■ BY SHANE STOREY

IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST PEOPLE, YOU SPEND MORE OF YOUR VALUABLE WAKING HOURS AT WORK THAN YOU DO ANYWHERE ELSE. WE ALL GET THOSE TYPES OF MONDAYS FROM TIME TO TIME AND, WHETHER YOU'RE THE BOSS OR ONE OF THE STAFF, IF IT'S A BAD FIT, PEOPLE WILL VOTE WITH THEIR FEET.

Few things are as costly and disruptive as bosses who kill morale. Difficult bosses contaminate the workplace. Some are more obvious, while others manipulate their employees, sometimes causing irrevocable damage by hindering performance and creating unnecessary stress.

Most of us have experienced the good boss, the bad boss and the downright ugly. Many a comedic skit or TV show has portrayed the "bad boss" scenario but, when it happens in reality, there's nothing funny about it.

Emotional intelligence is the key to both personal and professional success.

Having optimal emotional intelligence - the ability to recognise, understand and manage our own emotions and influence the emotions of others - can drive our behavior and impact people and work colleagues positively, especially when we're under pressure.

Before employers can start creating motivated, engaged employees there are some critical behaviours they need to eradicate:

COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEMS:

When the good staff up and leave and the rest become unmotivated.

Setting unnecessary rules - An overzealous policy or even a couple of unnecessary rules can drive people crazy. When employees feel like big brother is watching, they'll quickly find someplace else to work.

Not recognising accomplishments - It's too easy to underestimate the power of a "well done", especially with top performers who work hard and are intrinsically motivated. We all like a pat on the back from time to time.

Hiring and promoting the wrong people - Good hard-working employees want to work with like-minded professionals. To get stuck working alongside poor performers is a major demotivator. Promoting the wrong people is even worse.

Treating everyone equally - Don't treat the hard worker the same as the clock puncher. Reward good behaviour and it will be repeated.

Tolerating poor performance - A business is only as good as its weakest link. There must be consequences for poor performers.

Going back on commitments - Disregarding your commitments comes across as uncaring and disrespectful. Showing you are trustworthy and honourable will inspire confidence and trust.

Apathy - Bosses who fail to show they care about your productivity and aren't personally involved have high turnover rates. Show empathy during hard times and remember to celebrate successes and milestones.

AVOID NEGATIVE DEMOTIVATORS AND INSTIGATE THE FOLLOWING RULES:

The Platinum Rule - This is unlike the Golden Rule, which is to treat others as you want to be treated. We're all different and our needs are all different. Apply the Platinum Rule which corrects this flaw – learn how to read other people and adjust your treatment style to match the needs of the individual.

Firm but not harsh - Strength is an important quality in a leader. People need courage in their leaders. They need someone who they trust to make difficult decisions and watch over the good of the group, who's there for the long haul, without being pushy and domineering.

Communication - Be a good listener and make sure the communication is a two-way street. Set goals and provide context for the tasks you ask people to do, offer feedback, and keep your staff in the picture.

Role model - Walk the talk by demonstrating integrity every day through actions, not just words.

Transparency - Be transparent and forthcoming about company goals, expectations and plans. Employees will see through inconsistencies and gloss overs.

Humility - Be accountable and provide leadership for your team. Few things kill motivation more than the arrogance of a boss.

A good leader is a person who takes a little more than his share of the blame and a little less than his share of the credit.

Shane Storey has more than 20 years experience in financial accounting and is the Managing Director of accountancy specialists Storey & Associates, which offers innovative and creative solutions to business and investment needs and valuable business development advice. Storey & Associates can be contacted on (06) 355-4647, via email at administration@storey-associates.co.nz or visit their website at storeyandassociates.co.nz