



# The Energy of Conversation

Dedicated to Learning & Improvement

## Work is an emotional business

Some CIPD professionals pursue a career in HR for the L&D dream only to find themselves swamped in redundancy consultation and conflict resolution. It seems the remit of an HR Executive has evolved to suit the times.

To enable HR execs to stay focussed on Recruitment and Learning & Development, local managers have to get relationships with the individuals in their team absolutely right and there is a lot to contend with. Stress in a team can be triggered by a variety of issues: pressure of high workload, difficult clients, slow processes, technology failure, frustration at not feeling heard or understood, difficult work relationships, career blocks or general disengagement caused by a disconnect with top management.

Anger outbursts can leave employees grieving for loss of dignity while depression can impact on team spirit as well as personal performance. So what can managers do to prevent mild stress from developing into anxiety or depression? How does a manager prevent a disengaged member from turning into Keith from “The Office”?

From the HR office, the ‘psychic profile’ of a company can change depending on how close the team is to inter-departmental politics. The mental health of an organisation needs to be closely monitored. Managing performance is tough in itself while managing the varying emotions of staff can be a massive challenge. Understanding how employees want to *feel* when they are at work – at a very simple level – is a good starting point.

Some large companies operate EAP (Employee Assistance Programs) giving staff the option of a qualified counsellor on the end of a phone. Can coaching help to prevent a situation of that nature? And if so, who should the coach work with, the stressed employee or the line manager? Moreover, would a coach be confident enough to recognise the requirement for a therapist. Certainly, working in partnership with a qualified HR professional would make sense.

If the relationship between line manager and direct report has been damaged the manager needs to be accountable, either for its repair or for a different kind of resolution as the employee may not know the way forward. If the relationship appears to be in tact but the employee is not responding to requests or instructions, then it might be tempting to bring in a coach to work with the maverick team member wherein fact it would make more sense for the coach to work with the manager as ultimately this is where the accountability for action lies.

One thing is for sure; work is an emotional business and coaches must stay alert and tread very carefully across the sometimes thin line between therapy and coaching. To view a short film about the emotional needs of employees, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXjrOUII6as&feature=g-upl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXjrOUII6as&feature=g-upl).

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