

MONDAY MANNA

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EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO THRIVE

By Robert J. Tamasy

Max De Pree, an American businessman and writer, has written several thought-provoking books drawing from his experiences and observations in the workplace. One statement I have found especially interesting is: “Leaders owe people space, space in the sense of freedom. Freedom in the sense of enabling our gifts to be exercised. We need to give each other space to grow, to be ourselves.”

This insight seems particularly meaningful for me because nearly 16 years ago, a friend took that attitude when we decided to work together. Dave and I had known each other through our involvement with CBMC, including working together on the staff team. Not long after he started his own non-profit, Leaders Legacy, I was sensing it was time to do something new, so I met with Dave to solicit his advice.

After we talked for a while, it seemed obvious that working together in Leaders Legacy could prove to be mutually beneficial. I will never forget what Dave said to me that afternoon: “Bob, if you ever need a place where you can flourish and become all God wants you to be, we have a place for you.”

Up to that point I had experienced a fruitful career, enjoying many rewarding experiences as both a writer and editor. This invitation, however, promised to open doors I had yet to explore. And, as it turned out, my time with Leaders Legacy over the next 15 years provided many new opportunities that, I believe, did enable me to flourish professionally.

The key was simple. I was afforded, as De Pree wrote, the freedom to exercise my gifts, talents and experience more than ever before. In a sense, I felt like a thoroughbred racehorse when the jockey loosens the reins and gives it permission to run full out.

I had no complaints about my previous employers; nor do I wish to pat myself on the back in any way. It is just that in many situations, workers have unrealised capabilities – sometimes ones they fail to recognise themselves. Often it requires someone – the CEO, top management, even the supervisor, to say something like, “I see a lot of potential in you. But it is untapped. Maybe you do not even see it in yourself. I want to help you to become all that you can be.” Can you imagine how liberating it would be for a valued employee to hear that?

From the perspective of the Bible, taking this kind of approach would be part of “*loving your neighbour as yourself*” (Mark 12:31), and “*(doing) to others as you would have them do to you*” (Luke 6:31). Another passage, however, addresses this important leadership trait in a different way. Proverbs 27:23-27 admonishes everyone in authority, those having responsibility for those entrusted to our direction. It talks about being discerning, striving to be sensitive to the needs of those around us:

“Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations. When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field....”

Put the best interests of those working for us first – in most cases, it is also in our best interests.

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© 2017. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Tufting Legacies*; co-authored with David A. Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring*, and edited numerous other books, including *Advancing Through Adversity* by Mike Landry. Bob's website is www.bobtamasy-readywriterink.com, and his biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

Describe the working culture where you work. Are staff members encouraged to grow and thrive in utilising their talents, gifts and strengths?

Do you think giving workers freedom to explore and develop their innate abilities is important for job satisfaction? Why or why not?

What would be some of the challenges for companies in providing "space" for their employees, giving them the freedom to develop as De Pree described?

The passage included mentioned flocks of sheep, using a shepherding analogy for dealing with people. Do you think this comparison is appropriate to the workplace? Explain your answer.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about principles it presents, consider the following passages:

Psalm 139:13-14

Ephesians 2:10

Colossians 3:17,23

2 Timothy 3:16-17

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