



## Minding the Gap - August 2016

A Faith and Work Publication

Welcome to Minding the Gap, a monthly thought about faith in the workplace!

### "Critical Choices"

*Hello! We're taking a "late summer break" here and sending you a previously published Minding the Gap (January, 2014). "Critical Choices" continues to be on our minds these days not only at work but also nationally as we face the Presidential Election in November. Hope you find this yet meaningful and blessings for the rest of the summer!*

Throughout the life of any organization it is from time-to-time faced with making **critical choices**. These are choices that may impact everything from their marketing direction; to their financial health; to their leadership structure; to the vibrancy of their culture and community. What is often not realized is the potential impact that principles of our faith can have on these choices. I am deeply convinced faith values and principles are a rich resource available to use in making our choices or decision more effective than they might otherwise be. Let me illustrate with a story from the company, Reell, with which I worked.

Toward the end of 2000, as many will remember, our economy, particularly the technical sector, took a 'nosedive'. Reell, being a part of that sector, lost close to 35% of its revenue without any promise of recovery. Carly Fiorina, then CEO of HP, said "Who turned out the lights?" By February 2001, we had exhausted all the cost-cutting strategies possible - except wages, but were still losing money. So, we had to make a decision of whether we should lay off about 20% of our

workforce (40+ coworkers) or make some fairly significant compensation reductions - averaging 12-15%. The corporate leadership (about eight people) was queried as to their recommendations. Many felt we needed to reduce the workforce. If we didn't do that we would lose our best people. And besides, this was an excellent opportunity to let go those who were considered "dead wood" - very efficient.

Of the other "mind" were those who believed we should take the wage cut approach. The rationale which was applied here hearkened back to a part of our purpose statement "Reell is a team united in the operation of a business based on the practical application of spiritual values...". Thus, we considered some Judeo-Christian principles to give us perspective. The first being to reduce wages allowed a coworker to chose whether to stay or leave ("freedom of choice" - a basic principle found in Genesis 1). Secondly, the sharing of resources (money in this instance) was deeply ingrained in our culture. Working in teams included sharing everything from tools, to ideas, to time, to energy, to wisdom, etc. Sharing is a hallmark of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thirdly, the Christian conviction of 'emptying' ourselves for the sake of others (Phil 2:3-8), a premise for the highest form of love, becomes the glue for holding a corporate or any kind of community together.

Reell chose this approach and although there was no guarantee of success, in this case, it did provide a positive outcome in which morale was significantly increased; talent attrition minimal (one coworker left); commitment to service, quality and profit was deepened and trust that the leadership cared went 'through the roof'. It was risky, but it seemed to touch deeply the hearts and minds of literally hundreds of coworkers. Yes, the core principles and values of our faith can be effective for work communities!

Blessings in your world of work,

- Jim Grubs

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