

THE LOOMING RETIREMENT RESPONSE

GOALS:

1. To increase the recognition of covert pending/looming retirement behaviors of employees.
2. To provide an administrative example of a covert assessment of employee leadership behaviors.
3. To identify administrative behaviors that promote a calm and effective transition from active employment to a satisfying retirement.

RECOGNIZING & PLANNING OF JOB TERMINATION/RETIREMENT BEHAVIORS:

Research has shown that work behaviors often diminish as retirement age and retirement planning occur. Also, there are economic and psychological shifts that often occur with this transition. Some refer to the covert negative shifts in work behaviors related to job retirement as a “Short-Timer’s Attitude” or “ROAD Effect” (Retired-On-Active-Duty Effect). Such behaviors are sometimes recognized by administration and/or experienced by the potential retiree as a reduction in personal work-related incentives and/or a psychological disengagement. Such behaviors are often evidenced by:

- Reduction in personal work-related incentives and investment of time and energy

- Decrease in the incentive to problem-solve, take on new tasks, make decisions, and/or get personally involved in activities
- Decrease in the acceptance and importance of responsibilities
- Evidence of anxiety, restlessness, and a non-responsive mood with a “pass the buck” demeanor
- Being tired, nervous, and disengaged in job requirements and job demands
- Required job decisions become seen as less important
- Increase in reported health issues--truthfully warranted or fictitious
- Increase in personal pursuits --often related to family and leisure
- The “worn-out” syndrome--perceived by the self or others to be a disengagement of work responsibilities

A COVERT ASSESSMENT OF FUTURE LEADERSHIP ABILITY AS AN OUTCOME OF RETIREMENT

They sat quietly and watched each other. There were four people in the room—a chief administrator, a supportive administrator invited by the chief administrator, the person being interviewed, and the “observer”—the “observer” being a watchful and supportive person invited by the person being interviewed.

And so, it was—the four confined to a small room with an intention to interact verbally. Yet, the “observer” unobtrusively just listened, watched, and scrutinized. The behavioral dynamics of deferring all

comments and responses by the chief administrator to the supportive administrator was intended to be covert—but to the keen “observer” the interaction was interesting, unusual, and meaningful—*a true confirmation and reminder that all behavior has meaning!*

In retrospect and considering the chief administrator’s suspected behavior of deferment, there appeared to be a true intent of withdrawal by the chief administrator from the situation and conversation—including verbal contributions, non-verbal cues, and body language. With the known chief administrator’s successful lengthy employment and past competent control of verbal responses and decisions, there was a lingering question by the “observer” regarding the behavior of the chief administrator. The behavior became apparent that a possible change in administrative control was about to occur. The change soon became apparent within the next few weeks—retirement of the chief administrator was imminent.

Therefore: In keeping with the fact that “ALL BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING,” the covert non-responsive process presented by the chief administrator (no doubt) had meaning! The assessment by the chief administrator of a potential employee replacement who could meet the demands of an upcoming vacated position through a planned retirement proceeded quietly, unobtrusively, and with covert intention.

Such unintrusive behavior is often representative of a leader’s skill and covert responsibility regarding assessment and helpful determination of a possible and appropriate replacement post a

leader's retirement. This astute and quiet process of employee testing, watching, and a possible ultimate future leadership recommendation for advancement within an organization emphasizes intellectual leadership prowess.

Within two weeks, the suspected retirement of the chief administrator was confirmed.

EMPLOYER HELP FOR THE IMPENDING RETIREE:

An Employer Happening:

- Respect an employee's willingness, right, or need to participate honestly with the upcoming retirement process.
- Start talking with the potentially retiring employee early regarding the intended or employment-required retirement.
- Encourage and acknowledge the process of the employee's personal retirement/transition plans.
- Change the job description, work hours, or activities to permit a logical slowing or transfer of timely employee responsibilities. The transition of job description expectations could be many and creative. However, the showing of a caring and appreciative attitude for the possible need to slow job commitment in preparation for retirement confirms leadership understanding of natural tendencies related to impending retirement behaviors.
- Allow or selectively require organizational teaching or mentoring of new or selected employees for the purpose of

providing and encouraging other employees to experience future successful work behaviors.

- Increase leadership opportunities (rather than strict employee job description responsibilities) such as reviewing organizational job descriptions for improvement, mentoring other employees, measuring of employee's compliance and knowledge of existing job descriptions, and accepting recommendations for the updating of job descriptions.
- Listen to concerns—especially related to retirement issues. Show empathy for the emotional aspect(s) that might accompany the retirement transition.
- Take the time to honor, commend, and show the value regarding past and present positive work performance by attending an appropriate retirement party. If attendance is not possible, write a note or send a card of appreciation of past work efforts and successes.
- When asked by the retiree to provide a letter of recommendation, reiterate positive contributions and employee behaviors that have been supportive of the organization.
- Request that the retiree submit job recommendations of hiring and job description behaviors that (from their work experience) would enhance and support the existing organizational standards.
- Consider the decrease in job-related/work hours or change in a job role to possibly enable the natural slowing of work responsibilities before retirement.

- Change job responsibilities or job description to have the retiree assess or teach work responsibilities/abilities that meet the demands of the position to be vacated.
- Involve the retiree in extracurricular non-employee activities post-retirement.

IN CLOSING

Awareness of surroundings as an administrator should encompass the administrative knowledge, understanding, and keen awareness that ALL BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING! Therefore, look, watch, and listen to the covert cues of impending retirement with awareness of related organizational changes. Then, ask appropriate and carefully structured unintrusive questions of the retiring suspect about potential retirement plans. This confirms or disaffirms potential organizational disruption as an outcome of retirement.

The reason and purpose of leadership is to responsively move the potential/intended retiree in the direction of personal retirement success and the organization in a smooth uninterrupted flow of transitional change.

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Recommended Reading: Establishing & Maintaining Positive Leadership Power (leadershippoweronline.com)

