

Black Friday– and the dark side of humanity

"The evil of our time is the loss of consciousness of evil." - . Krishnamurti

"Outta my way!" seems to be the mantra that defines many folks' orientation to Black Friday. Today, as in past years, again brought out the worst – the dark side, the shadow side – of folks

Consider:

"The start of the holiday shopping season included reports of fights among shoppers at numerous Wal-Marts nationwide...Tazewell County, Va., sheriff department reports it arrested Ronnie Sharp, 61, and Christopher Jackson, 35, after responding to a call of a fight in a parking lot of the Wal-Mart; Sharp was allegedly threatening Jackson with a rifle and a knife when sheriff's deputies arrived on the scene. Jackson was suffering from a severe knife cut on his arm...Police in Rialto, Calif., said an officer broke his hand and finger trying to break up a fight in a Wal-Mart parking lot. Raymond Rice, 25, was charged with felony assault and assault on a police officer...Police arrested a Wisconsin woman who cut in front of a long line - after she allegedly threatened to shoot those she moved ahead of." (CNN.com 11-29-13). There are just the preliminary reports

On this day last year, in North Buffalo, New York, several shoppers were trampled – trampled! - as they surged through a Target store. Reports called it a "nasty mob."

Out-of-control, pushy and unruly (and for what!?) shoppers in Sacramento, California, caused a store to be evacuated. The Sheriff's office had to be brought in.

Store managers and others connected to these incidents say the causes are generally competition and anxiety. Competition and anxiety.

That gets me to thinking of how many of our workplaces – on the other 364 days a year - are characterized by both subtle and not-so-subtle competition and anxiety. I'd say more than a few.

I'm curious about what the consequences are of much of our workplace "competition and anxiety." Often, folks experience colleagues and co-workers whose behavior reflects some type of assault on "anybody who gets in my way"- a "Black-Friday-type of mentality" of folks whose sole reason for living is to take care of themselves and work for his or her own good - blinded by an own ego-driven need to succeed at any cost.

While such violent instances of "stomping on" and "trampling over" others are not everyday occurrences in our workplaces, the mantra of "stepping on folks to get what I want" is — a mantra chanted daily by some leaders, managers and employees who are driven by their own flavor of "competition and anxiety." While we don't witness actual stampedes on a daily basis at work, we do witness more subtle, but equally-painful"- crimes of "morale-stomping," "spirit-stomping," "satisfaction-stomping," "passion-stomping" and "reputation-stomping" by those who mis-treat, ill-use and abuse their colleagues just to assuage their own ego needs for control, recognition and security — driven by "competition and anxiety."

Those who step on and trample over others to get what they want, to feel like a "somebody," usually fall into the categories of bullies, narcissists, and psychopaths — folks who don't or can't respect others, trust others or see the humanity in others - at work, at home, at play and in relationship. Their deeper emotional and psychological issues drive them to regard relationships as win-lose or something to dominate. Their "win at all costs" approach to relationships is based a need to be triumphant while shaming or humiliating others.

Corrupting, manipulating, bullying, gossiping, one-upping, disrespecting and devaluing others in order to

gain power and praise, status and influence, and control are these folks' "Black Friday outta-my-way!" behaviors that destroy others. Intimidation, back-stabbing, and sabotage are their "Black Friday, outta my way!" behaviors that cause others mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological distress – stomping on others' passion and spirit.

In order to survive, to feel "seen" and be "somebody," these bullies, psychopaths and narcissists trample on others through humiliation, criticism, persecution, ignore, sabotaging, attacking, scapegoating, ganging up on, subjugating, denigrating, and contradicting others, as they seek special treatment for themselves.

From an emotional or psychological perspective, what brings one to walk all over people? What causes some leaders, managers and employees to trample on and walk all over others? What's underneath their ruthlessness? Here are three sources:

- Upbringing – being raised in a harsh, abusive environment where they were consistently called lazy, good for nothing, or stupid, i.e., a "nobody". This individual sees the workplace as their "family." Their "I'll show you I'm somebody!" mantra drives them to walk over others in order to feel, and prove to others, they have value and worth.
- Compliance - growing up in an environment that resembled boot camp. Now they intimidate and threaten in order to feel successful. They demand complete compliance and obedience. Stomping on others is their "motivational approach" of to exact compliance.
- Ignorance - they don't know how else to be. Growing up in an environment where force was king, they integrated "force" into their psyche and so, "force it is." It's their default programming.

On Black Friday, as in many of our workplaces, the important question is, "Where is civility?"

So, some questions for self-reflection:

- Do folks feel distressed workplace? Do you have systems in place to support these folks? If not, why not?
- Are bullies, psychopaths and narcissists a major reason folks leave your organization? Is abuse a reason people leave?
- How does your organization deal with abrasive people? Business as usual?"
- How are matters of abuse dealt with?
- Do performance and productivity suffer as a result of emotional distress? Are folks passive-aggressive? Is "presenteeism" a common occurrence in your workplace?
- Do you suffer from presenteeism (showing up but far less than 100%) due to workplace bullies, psychopaths or narcissists?
- Do folks feel helpless when dealing with arrogant, abrasive leaders, managers and colleagues?
- Have you ever been accused of being arrogant, abrasive, bullying, or disrespectful? How did that make you feel?
- Did people in your childhood environment reflect elements of bullying, narcissism or psychopathology? Did you?
- Have you ever stepped on someone else to get what you want? Do you now?
- Have you ever been victimized by someone who stepped on you to get ahead? What was that like?

"The greatest evil is not done in those sordid dens of evil that Dickens loved to paint...but it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried) in clear, carpeted, warmed, well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voices." - C.S. Lewis, Introduction of the *Screwtape Letters*

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