
Forgiveness in the workplace

Michael Stone

The author

Michael Stone is Director, Mastery of Management International, Nevada City, California, USA.

Keywords

Employee relations, Improvement, Employee development

Abstract

Most of us have some appreciation for the healing nature of forgiveness in our personal lives, even if we do not always practice it! But, in the world of work it is an act even more rare than the expression of authentic gratitude and appreciation. It is the intention of this paper to show that, in this new economy, which is characterized by escalating speed of change, increasing alienation and a growing search for meaning, it makes good business sense to practice the art of forgiveness. True forgiveness supports the retention of valued employees, allows for greater creativity and innovation, leads to increased profitability, and generates greater flexibility in adapting to changing market conditions.

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What is forgiveness

Webster's *New World College Dictionary* states that to forgive is:

... to give up resentment against or the desire to punish; stop being angry with; pardon or to give up all claim to punish or exact penalty for (an offense); overlook.

Ultimately forgiveness means to give up blame or faultfinding. One of the reasons this is difficult at work is that our organizational and legal structures create cultural norms which do not support acts of forgiveness – someone (or something) is always to “blame” – and if we let people “off the hook”, there is a fear that this would be a signal that such behavior is condoned and it would undermine accountability setting a bad example for other employees.

In his book *Trusting You are Loved*, Epstein (1999) had this to say about forgiveness:

... We are, by forgiving, in essence granting complete absolution and redemption. We relinquish our right to punish, cling to resentments, and hold grudges. We give ourselves and each other permission to move on, free of baggage and history, able to progress without the burdens of the past. Forgiveness fosters our well-being when we know that no matter what happens, we will forgive and be forgiven. In an environment of love and forgiveness, we thrive.

I remember a teacher I once had who demonstrated forgiveness in action – no matter what crazy teenage thing I did, he always forgave me and looked for the good in my behavior, without judgment or resentment, even though my actions did not make his life any easier – I never worked so hard for any teacher, nor learned so much. Our organizations and employees will also thrive and flourish if we begin to practice forgiveness in the workplace. I believe that the primary purpose of leadership is to “create an environment of thriving,” which allows people to grow, learn and contribute in a safe place where they feel they belong. Forgiveness is the most challenging and essential element of attaining a more nurturing and fulfilling climate at work.

Current view

When I interviewed executives in the USA the common opinion was that forgiveness was an abstract philosophical or religious idea that



was “inappropriate” to discuss in the workplace. It often brought up fears about losing trust and/or control. There was a common fear that the balance of power would be disrupted and it would create a permissive environment that would lead to chaos and anarchy.

As I took my search out into other cultures I soon found that this was a subject that was rarely addressed or practiced in organizational settings, regardless of culture. In Singapore forgiveness was translated as “kindness” and it was said to have no place in the work community, because people are “not allowed to break the rules”. In Germany no one wanted to discuss the subject and it was looked at as some crazy US notion. In Holland people showed greater interest, yet had little actual experience of forgiveness in the workplace. Each culture seems to have built in structures to avoid the practice of forgiveness, yet representatives from each culture reported a growing discontent amongst workers and an increasing search for meaning and appreciation from their work.

The value of forgiveness

What we fail to realize is that when we do not forgive, “relinquish our right to punish, cling to resentments and hold grudges”, we pay an enormous price. Our ability to appreciate the strengths and admirable qualities in others and ourselves is reduced, discretionary effort is limited, and our ability to be fully present and focused on current issues and projects are greatly diminished. In short people do not feel free to contribute their passion, innovation and unique talents in an unforgiving culture.

Upsets are a function of undelivered communications, unfulfilled expectations and thwarted intentions. So carrying resentments towards others keeps us in a subtle and constant state of low grade upset. In addition to the energy drain of these festering sores of discontent we begin to expect more of the same behavior and we watch the other person for further evidence of why they cannot be trusted. This brings about a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy where the person feels (and demonstrates) that they cannot do anything right around you.

The greatest obstacle to connecting with our joy is resentment (Chödrön, 2001).

Forgiveness gives us an opportunity to use the mistakes, failures, flaws and breakdowns of life as opportunities to awaken greater wisdom, compassion and capability in our co-workers and ourselves. The practice of forgiveness supports the development of organizational cultures where people feel free to take responsible risks, stop withholding their creativity, and demonstrate personal ownership and enthusiastic contribution. We can create greater internal harmony and healing by practicing the art of forgiveness, by using failures and unwanted situations to develop a culture of compassion and understanding, a place where people feel safe to express fully their natural genius and creativity, a place where they feel appreciated and experience a sense of joy and meaning from their work.

Through forgiveness, which essentially means recognizing the insubstantiality of the past and allowing the present moment to be as it is, the miracle of transformation happens not only within but also without (Tolle, 1999).

When we do not forgive someone for his or her actions, we are left energetically holding on to something from the past. In other words we can never be fully present or move forward with that person because this constant reminder from the past robs us of our energy, attention and awareness. To encourage the greatest contribution, commitment and professional mastery in someone, we need to operate in the present. In this state of heightened awareness people can thrive and contribute their ideas, their passion and their dedication. When we hold on to our resentments we lose a part of ourselves as these incomplete experiences from the past build on themselves and create a thickening wall of separation, alienation and mistrust. We need the “whole person” (mind, body, emotions and spirit) available in order to meet the ever increasing pace of doing business in today’s market place. The failure to forgive keeps us stuck in the past, producing an endless cycle of reoccurring events which continue to spiral downward towards greater and greater alienation, separation and explanation.

A systems approach

Often we fail to think systemically in dealing with organizational issues. Each level of

system has its own unique set of problems and opportunities. Actions at one level of a system will not necessarily produce the same outcome at other levels of the system. Therefore it is important to be aware of the impact of our actions on each level of the system. For instance I do not want to work with the personal productivity issues of an individual team member with the whole team present. Rather, I would work with that individual in a private setting to make requests or offer suggestions and coaching. Only if it expanded into a team issue would I make adjustments with a team level intervention. Before going into how to develop a forgiving culture let us look at the impact of a non-forgiving culture on different levels of a system.

Impact of a lack of forgiveness on different levels of a system

Context gives meaning. If we look at four primary levels of system in an organization as contexts we can see how the lack of forgiveness at each contextual level produces different meanings and different outcomes. At each of these levels there is a loss of energy, which is being used for covering up, playing safe and avoiding potentially painful situations. This energy could be used to learn, grow, connect and be more productive. Table I shows the predictable outcomes of a context where forgiveness is missing. If these symptoms are present at these different levels

of system it is a good indication that forgiveness is missing.

As you can see from Table I, the costs of not forgiving has an enormous impact at each level of system. If individuals feel that they are not forgiven, or they cannot forgive themselves, there is a risk of increasing separation, which leads to “doing their own thing” and creating safety by becoming more and more invisible or more adversarial. It is predictable that they will withhold their discretionary effort, creativity, and authenticity becoming increasingly more alienated, self-absorbed, and preoccupied with doubt and self-criticism. Since the most common need of most people in an organization is to belong, this alienation will continue to grow until that person leaves the organization or becomes an ineffective member of the organization just waiting for retirement.

I remember one person in an organization I worked with who had made a mistake in his calculations on a project, which meant that the project came in way over budget. The president of the company yelled and screamed at him in front of the management team. From that time on he made sure that he never made any mistakes. He did his calculations over three and four times, building into his departmental culture a “when in doubt, play it safe” attitude. This caused an enormous slowdown in productivity for the entire company. The manager communicated less and less with the other members of the management team and

Table I Impact of lack of forgiveness on different levels of system

Individual	Dyad	Team	Organization
Alienation	Separation	Internal competition	Controlling behavior
Self-doubt	Conflict	Lack of common direction	Secrecy
Righteousness	Blame	Fault finding	Mistrust
Preoccupation	Avoidance	Jealousy	High turnover
Anger/withdrawal	Mistrust	Negative politics	Protective behavior
Lack of creativity/innovation	Controlling	Gossip	Back stabbing
Poor health	Punishing	Manipulation	Over-work
Unhappiness	Frustration	Stress	Out of balance
Guilt	Anger	Frustration	Confusion
Fear	Tension	Denial	Political posturing
Depression	Judgmental	Score keeping	Non-coordinated workforce
Suffering	Disharmony	Distance	Low allegiance
Low self-esteem	Agitation		
	Disappointment		
	Defensiveness		
	Inauthentic behavior		

was eventually let go in a company-wide reorganization. Would this very talented and skilled employee have acted differently if his president had supported him through forgiveness and considered the healing power of forgiveness as important as reprimanding?

Two-person systems (dyads) where forgiveness is missing are breeding grounds for upset and conflict. When one person feels justified in holding on to anger, blame and resentment the other feels a need to protect themselves. Both parties feel victimized by the other, bringing about protective behavior that leads to justification, faultfinding, avoidance and malicious gossip. The individuals involved will often go to others in the organization to gain agreement on why they are feeling justified in avoiding the other person and the conflict can soon create tension or bring about punishing behavior in other relationships, increasing the complexity of the initial issue. By gossiping about another person to someone else, that person is now involved in the conflict.

Not long ago I was working with a CEO and a VP of an organization to support them in establishing clear working agreements with each other. When we had established the basic operating agreement I guided them towards speaking about their underlying concerns. The CEO felt they had a pretty good working relationship, in spite of what he called “regular head butting”, but wondered if the VP really trusted him, even though they had been working together for many years. For the first time in their 15 years of working together the VP felt free to discuss his mistrust of the CEO. After inquiring into the source of the mistrust it turned out that the VP was still holding on to resentment towards the CEO over a time ten years earlier when he would not approve his request for educational support. He had been using this resentment as evidence for why he could not trust his boss for over a decade. When the CEO apologized and the VP forgave him a whole new energy and enthusiasm entered their working relationship. Their new collaboration served as a working model and set an example that inspired the entire team to new levels of cooperation, collaboration, and open authentic communication. The VP took on greater responsibility and freed up some of the CEO’s time to work on some community projects that he had wanted to devote himself to promoting.

When a team is blamed for a mistake, or is hurt in some way either intentionally or inadvertently (which is most often the case) and there is no forgiveness present the team members begin to feel like it is “us against them”. Conversations between team members revolve around what is wrong with the other teams or “corporate” and it becomes difficult to unravel the situation because there is no longer a responsible person or persons directly involved. You cannot forgive phantom entities like “them”, “accounting”, “sales”, “HR”, or “corporate”. This team separation leads to score keeping, negative politics, internal competition, and kingdom building within an organization.

Not long ago I was working with a large financial institution that went through a major reorganization. One group that was very profitable for the company was put under a new management structure such that the team leader, who was greatly revered by her team members, no longer had direct access to the CEO and founder of the organization. This person felt hurt and rejected and the team members, sensing her pain and feeling their own sense of betrayal, began to share their discontent and anger with the situation. Conflicts arose with members of other teams and departments further separating them from the rest of the organization. They were seen as prima donnas and difficult to work with, which led to more controls being placed on them and more anger and discontent. Where they had felt a certain level of status and respect for many years, they now felt unappreciated and abandoned. Work and profitability suffered and the leader who had been responsible for building this very successful and talented team left the company, as did many of the team members.

At the system level of organization we are dealing with cultural issues from within the organization and community perceptions from outside. A culture that does not promote forgiveness will be engaged in negative and destructive politics. People will be afraid to speak out and will hide their true feeling, secrecy will be the common operating mode, employee trust will be low, and turnover will be high. In a climate of secrecy people assume the worst, which leads to internal competition, gossip and misinformation. Typically in this type of organization it takes a great deal of effort to produce even the smallest results and burnout is common.

Rapid response to internal or external failures and breakdowns will be difficult and the community will be distrustful and find it difficult to forgive the organization. In this new economy it is the ability to respond quickly and effectively that will make or break an organization.

Compare the public response towards Johnson and Johnson's Tylenol scare to the handling of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Johnson and Johnson, known for their caring and compassionate culture, responded immediately by calling all products from shelves across the country while simultaneously developing new tamper-proof packaging. The result led to an increase in market share and increased customer loyalty and confidence.

Contrast this with the public (and shareholder) outrage at the way Exxon handled the Alaskan oil spill. They moved slowly, trying to cover themselves legally and to minimize their losses, while the media was showing images of lifeless oil soaked birds, dead fish and a decimated coastline. It did not appear that Exxon cared anything about the environmental impact of the accident. Employees felt embarrassed to be working there. Many citizens were and are still angry, even hostile towards the company, people sold their stock, protested at shareholder meetings and many will still avoid an Exxon gas station at any cost. Had this organization had a more forgiving culture inside they almost surely would have acted more responsibly and appropriately to the situation. They would have tried to work more in partnership with the community who would have in turn been more forgiving. Forgiveness always begins with telling the truth and acknowledging one's responsibility in the matter.

Why don't we forgive?

Why is it so hard to forgive? Why can't we just tell the truth, make appropriate adjustments, let go of resentments and past disappointments and learn from our mistakes? Given the impact on all levels of the organization and the community, it would seem that organizational leaders would make forgiveness a priority.

One reason we do not practice forgiveness in the workplace is that we have very few

examples or role models to teach us how to do it. Learning to practice forgiveness begins with learning how to forgive ourselves – the person we are usually the hardest on; it is only through demonstrating forgiveness towards ourselves that we can teach it to others and begin to create a more forgiving culture. When we can embrace our own unique humanity, we authentically develop compassion towards others.

While the costs of not forgiving are great, the costs of forgiving are often perceived as greater. The underlying concerns that people have are based in their fear of loss of face and/or loss of possession. Loss of face comes from a concern about what others will think of us if we fail and a fear of being embarrassed or rejected by others. Loss of possession is about protecting territory such as money, position and property. Since we usually view our life as our ultimate possession this includes the fear of being hurt physically or emotionally, or in some way having our self-image (character) assassinated. These concerns are present to some degree for all of us. Effective leaders learn to recognize and forgive mistakes, failures and indiscretions before they turn into conflict or grow into resentments that begin the downward spiral of alienation and discontent.

What we need to forgive in others may be something in ourselves that we have hidden from our awareness (Jampolsky and Cicione in *Course in Miracles*, 1975).

In addition to these underlying concerns, we find that it is safer and easier to not talk with people about the things that they have done which have upset us and for which we carry our resentments. It is more comfortable to hold on to our grievances, which are familiar, than to have to confront others and their unknown reactions. Our judgments keep us safe and separate so that we do not have to deal with our own possible contribution to what we are having difficulty forgiving, or we might be avoiding dealing with similar actions and attitudes in ourselves. When we point our finger at others we do not have to look at ourselves and what we have not been able to forgive in ourselves.

Another reason that we do not forgive is the fear that forgiving might be seen as a message that we accept their behavior, leading to future reoccurrences. So we dwell on the unwanted behavior of the other person and withhold ourselves from them as punishment

for their wrongdoings; a constant reminder to never do that again in the future. We fail to realize that holding on to our anger or resentment to punish another is creating a prison of our own pain, isolation and alienation.

The impact of forgiveness on different levels of a system

Let us turn our attention now to looking at how to create a more forgiving culture and what is possible with such a transformational shift. Again, Table II shows us the impact of demonstrating forgiveness at different contextual levels of the system.

There are not as many examples to draw from where forgiveness has been practiced in the workplace, especially at the higher levels of the system. But, it is easy to see how true forgiveness at each level can shape the attitudes, reactions and outcomes at each level. To practice forgiveness we must realize that we always have a choice as to how we will react in any situation.

I personally remember a very painful experience when I was working on a training project for a large corporation. It was a job developing internal consultants who had the capacity to make a huge difference in transforming the organizational culture in very positive ways. The kind of work I really love! The work was going very well and the people were enthusiastically responding to my training and intervention. Poor professional

judgment in a professional situation alienated a senior executive and my contract was terminated. While I understood their concerns about the potential impact on the team and my ability to work effectively with them, it was a very painful awakening.

I felt betrayed by my friend and the person who made the decision to terminate me. Waves of anger, sadness and shame continued to pulse through my body for weeks afterward. I was devastated . . . It took everything I had to go to my own primary teaching: that we can use everything in our path to develop greater compassion, joy and fulfillment. I found myself having to forgive my client and myself over and over again. Mostly I was extremely hard on myself! But I kept asking how could I use this for my fulfillment and the greatest good. Then I saw that I was doing exactly the work I needed to be doing. That this incident, as painful as it was, was directing me to make forgiveness a priority in my work and life. It became clear to me that I needed to include forgiveness in all my work and that the real healing in this new economy was going to come from speaking, demonstrating and promoting the value of forgiveness as a basic leadership principle.

Recently a friend was telling me the story of a client who was the CEO of a midsized company who had a VP that was secretly bringing a lawsuit against him and saying awful and untrue things about him behind his back. Rather than respond to the rumors and gossip, this courageous leader chose forgiveness over retaliation. Knowing that the claims against

Table II Impact of forgiveness on different levels of system

Individual	Dyad	Team	Organization
Happiness	Partnership	Mutually supportive	Open authentic culture
Presence	Collaboration	Feeling of community	Focus on contribution and service
Creativity/innovation	Trust	Joy/fun	Employee retention
Vibrant health	Open/authentic	Playfulness	Flexible work force
Autonomy	Communication	Shared learning	Respected in the community
Personal responsibility	Supportive	Interconnection	Empowerment
Peace of mind	Acknowledgment	Action orientation	Pride in organization
Authenticity	Appreciation	Clarity of roles	Meaningful work
Freedom to self-express	Gratitude	Direction	Values in action
Choice	Ownership	Sense of belonging	
Self assurance	Interconnection		
Focused	Respectful		
Openness	Growth		
	Nurturing		
	Sharing Information		
	Compassion		

him were without substance he set about to operate with the utmost compassion and integrity in their working relationship. In the face of the strong working relationship that developed, the VP dropped the lawsuit. When he found out that the CEO had known about it all along he was inspired and became the CEO's most loyal and trusted business partner. He took personal responsibility for his actions and forgave the CEO for all the things that he had felt wronged for and began to practice the open and authentic communication that was being demonstrated by the CEO. Their collaboration became a model that nurtured all those working for them and the story became part of the culture expanding forgiveness and gratitude throughout the organization.

I remember working with one of the telecommunications companies years ago during a merger with a smaller company. The smaller company was known for its creativity, innovation and alacrity. From the start there were major cultural clashes and several teams of representatives from each company were set up to discover how to work together more harmoniously and effectively. They started out by sharing what they liked and did not like about the merger and what the other team represented, bringing up many painful issues. They practiced listening without retaliation or argument. Then they went into who and what there was to forgive, ending the process by acknowledging what they valued and appreciated about the others and their company. This process continued over a series of months and slowly began to impact the entire culture as the two teams became closer in both their working and personal relationships. This allowed them to put the past in the past and envision a common future. As a result, the entire company benefited by the outstanding work done by these two teams; a sense of community emerged and people felt respected and took pride in being a part of this company.

Self-awareness and choice

Transformation begins by raising our awareness and demonstrating responsible choice at the intrapersonal level. Most of us are harder on ourselves than our worst enemies. If we can slow down, breathe, and be still for a moment we begin to hear the constant barrage of criticism we have towards

ourselves: "I'm so stupid, I can't believe I did that, next time I will do it better, I'm just not good enough, What I have to say isn't important, I never get it right."

To not forgive is a decision to suffer (*Course in Miracles*, 1975).

We have all had painful experiences in our past. These experiences remain dormant until something in the present reminds us of them. When this happens we tend to react in a manner similar to our earlier encounter and project our painful memories from the past on to the present situation. In other words our thoughts from the past shape our experiences in the present. By raising our own awareness of this phenomenon we can start to choose our reaction based on the present situation rather than our past beliefs and experiences. We cannot change our past, but we can choose a more nurturing, compassionate and productive response in the present.

The last of man's freedoms is the freedom to choose his attitude under any given circumstance (Frankle, 1997).

Our attitudes determine the quality of our perceptions. Since we think, feel, act and process information based not on reality, but rather on our perception of reality it is essential to examine our own attitudes or mind set. As we do this we find we are always confronted with a choice, either to react based on our history, expectations, and past perceptions, or consciously choose to generate a response in the moment, based on our values and vision. In order to make conscious choices we must be present to our own thoughts, feelings and sensations.

Time and presence

Many of us are finding that the increasing pace of doing our jobs is leading to greater stress, less time for personal fulfillment and declining satisfaction. We change jobs, companies, locations, and careers in an ever-growing climate of discontent and an increasing search for meaning. Forgiveness can help us to be more present and greatly reduce the stress in our lives.

Forgiveness can free us from the imprisonment of fear and anger that we have imposed on our minds. It releases us from our need and hope to change the past (Jampolsky, in *Course in Miracles*, 1975).

Tolle (1999), in his book, *The Power of Now*, distinguishes between “clock time”, that which deals with the practical aspects of our lives, and “psychological time”, which is identified with the past and our continuous compulsive projection into the future. While our focus is often on the past and future it must be remembered that everything that is occurring is in the present. If we made a mistake in the past and learn from it we are dealing with clock time as well as when we plan a trip, do a strategic plan for our company, or make an appointment. It is important to learn to distinguish these different types of time so that we can strengthen our ability to make healthy choices in the present.

Nonforgiveness necessarily implies a heavy burden of psychological time (Tolle, 1999).

When we have guilt, self-criticism, and remorse, or find ourselves dwelling on past issues we are in psychological time. To see how much we get caught in this practice we must learn to slow down, breathe and focus our awareness on the present moment. Noticing our thoughts, judgments and evaluations lets us see how firmly the past and future have a grip on us and take us away from the freedom to make choices and take action in and from the present. We begin to see how much we derive a sense of our “self” from the constant stream of thoughts that cross the window of our mind. So this process of forgiveness, if addressed with any real depth, takes us to the question of, “Who are we really?” Are we the body, the mind, our judgments, evaluations and assessments? These essential questions help us to focus on what is really important in our work and lives.

You derive your sense of self from the content and activity of your mind. Because you believe that you would cease to be if you stopped thinking (Tolle, 1999).

Creating a culture of forgiveness

The real work of forgiveness begins on the individual level of awareness. Contrary to our constant search for happiness from people and situations outside ourselves, nothing and no one outside ourselves will ever bring us true happiness. Thinking that the right job, the right employees, the right partner, the right amount of money or stuff will bring us the joy and satisfaction we seek is a delusion

that keeps us from discovering real happiness which can only come from fully embracing this precious moment.

When we forgive, we free ourselves from the fear and anger that we have imposed on our minds by holding on to the past. The people who we feel have betrayed us or let us down become mirrors for our own growth and development. By having compassion for ourselves we can more deeply understand the needs, desires, fears and motivations of others. This can bring great peace of mind, reduce stress and lead to greater satisfaction, joy and fulfillment from our work.

Forgiving others is the first step to forgiving ourselves (*Course in Miracles*, 1975).

Interpersonal relationships will thrive if we let go of having to be right about what the other person has done wrong and take the first steps towards creating more nurturing relationships. Saying “I’m sorry” is not a sign of weakness. It takes great courage and strength of character to take responsibility for creating healing in a relationship even when the fault appears to belong to the other party. This is not about fault or blame. It is about using the discontent, anger and letdowns in a relationship to learn, grow, set appropriate boundaries, negotiate clear working agreements and resolve unfulfilled expectations and miscommunications.

When we demonstrate forgiveness at the level of team, people feel safe to express themselves fully, leading to greater creativity, innovation and risk taking. People will work harder and have crucial “courageous conversations” because they feel recognized and appreciated. They are willing to play full out because they feel safe to voice their concerns as well as their dreams and aspirations. Forgiveness leads to an empowered and fully functioning work team.

Organizations that develop a culture of forgiveness (and gratitude) will breed authentic, courageous and open conversations based on their values and vision as well as the current commitments and strategic objectives. This develops trusts and will build pride in the organization. Customer satisfaction will soar because people will bring the quality of joy and satisfaction to their work and customers. People will find greater meaning and value in the work they are doing. In a forgiving organization people will want to stay and will work towards the success of the

company and their fellow employees. Employee retention ceases to be an issue. A true sense of community will arise within the organization.

A story of community forgiveness

Here is a story that comes from Africa. When a person acts unjustly or irresponsibly in the Babema tribe of South Africa, he is placed alone in the center of the village but is in no way prevented from running off.

Everyone in the village stops working and gathers in a circle around the person who has been accused. Then each person, regardless of age, begins to tell the person in the center about all the good things he or she has done during his or her life.

Everything that can be remembered about this person is described in great detail. All the accused's positive attributes, good deeds, strengths, and kindnesses are verbalized for that person's benefit. Each person in the circle does this in great detail.

All the stories about this person are told with the utmost sincerity and love. No one is allowed to exaggerate events that happened. And everyone knows that they cannot make stories up. Nobody is insincere or sarcastic as they speak.

This ceremony continues until everyone in the village has had his or her say about how they value this person as a respected member of their community. This process can go on for several days. In the end, the tribe breaks the circle, and a joyous celebration occurs as the person is welcomed back into the tribe.

While this method is not practical in the busy pace of our new economy it does point to several practices that lead to a more fulfilling work environment. People in most of the organizations I visit do not feel valued and appreciated, let alone recognized. Forgiveness and gratitude always go hand in hand. Taking the time to offer support to people when they have made a mistake or failed bonds them to the community and gives them a sense of belonging. Celebration of people's greatness is much more empowering than trying to fix their flaws and weaknesses. If we truly want to create a more nurturing and compassionate workplace where people feel a sense of purpose and meaning it is essential to make gratitude and forgiveness a regular practice. It not only makes sense to treat people with compassion and understanding, it makes business sense – the firms that grow and thrive in the twenty-first century are the ones that create an environment of thriving in the workplace by practicing the principles of compassionate leadership.

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