**Virtuous Compromises***Ethics Column for The Journal Record, April 3, 2017*

Fighting among co-workers is bound to happen, especially in high pressure settings. In fact, a 2014 *Wall Street Journal* report cited a Harris poll that indicated 3 out of 5 corporate employees will conflict with others over priorities, misunderstandings, resources or just personality differences.

As a result, productivity suffers, even by reluctant witnesses such as unnerved bystanders. Leaders must act decisively to resolve issues and virtuous compromise may be the answer.

Unfortunately, compromise has become a dirty word in our culture today. Instead, the tendency is toward a winner-take-all approach, even though it’s unhealthy and can hinder the overall success of an organization. Fostering tribal competition among departments creates disruption by undermining important values such as deference for the well-being of others, flexibility, respect, cooperation, tolerance, courage and self-control. Compromise that emphasizes virtues is a better way to overcome stifling conflict, calm emotions and reinforce integrity in an organization’s culture. Luckily, there are some tried-and-true approaches to achieving virtuous compromises:

***Focus on the highest principles first.*** There is always sacrifice involved in the unselfish give-and-take process of compromise. It is less painful when stakeholders are working together for the good of the organization, especially in supporting higher principles such as truthfulness in dealing with customers and shareholders. Compromise should not involve conceding one’s integrity, so it is important to ask if the outcome will build individual character and enhance the reputation of the company - or tear it down?

***Show genuine concern for others.***  An authentic approach to understanding and acknowledging other’s perspectives could uncover facts that are important to achieving optimal outcomes, including building trust.

 ***Pick your battles.*** Is this a turf war based on ego or is it really important to your company, colleagues or the ability to do your job? Will someone be hurt if the problem is left unresolved? And, are you truly empowered to make the compromise?

***Keep emotions in check.*** Compromise requires a balanced sense of humility and courage. Strong personalities can become so enamored with their own ideas that it is difficult to be open-minded to other possibilities. Passive individuals may be inclined to follow the old adage of “going along to get along” – even if it’s a bad idea.

Virtuous compromise is about winning the war against pressures that impede positive relationships. It is essential for business and individual success.

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