

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

THE NEW YEAR'S LETTER YOUR EMPLOYEES WON'T BE GETTING THIS YEAR... BUT SHOULD

Dear Fellow Employees:

We've got to talk.

It's another year in business, and we're still in business. Every year seems like a struggle any more, but we made it through. This new year promises to have its share of challenges too. And that's why you're getting this letter.

I've got a few pointed questions I need to ask you. Please don't take offense to any of these, but I have to know the answers if I'm going to keep the doors open this year.

As a valued employee, are you up for the challenges of 2005?

I mean, even though you worked really hard for us last year, and I truly appreciate what you were able to contribute, no one is guaranteed a job this year. Not even me. Just think about all the things I've got to worry about on the company's behalf; rising healthcare costs, challenges from overseas outsourcing, the declining value of the dollar, and increased competition are just the beginning.

Companies are laying off left and right, which means there are many more qualified people out there who are really motivated to work. There are too many good people out there to let slackers continue to take up space. In 2005, I can't afford to employ anyone who's not contributing their very best.

Are you giving me your very best on the job right now?

You see, I need to know now. When times get leaner, I'm going to try to protect everyone. But when the company accountants begin to suggest changes, the first place they'll tell us to look is our payroll. And then I have to start making decisions.

Are you vital or expendable?

Is there anything you have done or continue to do that's extraordinary? Great? Very good? Just average? Or are there work habits or character traits about you that are less than average?

If I was undecided about you, could you make a strong case for yourself for you to keep your job?

If you don't know, then I have another question for you: Why do I keep you around anyway?

Is it fair to the others to continue to support you if you're not doing your very best for the good of the organization? If I took a poll of your co-workers and asked who was pulling their weight and who wasn't, would you know what the answers were before I even tallied the results?

And if so, where would you be on the list?

I may be the boss, but I've also got a family and bills to pay, just like you. Take a look around. Part of my job is protecting each and every one of your co-workers from fellow employees who aren't making the grade.

Don't take it personally. It's business, plain and simple. You see, some of the companies that are laying off dozens of people are ones that found themselves too deep in less-than-productive employees, and chose to do nothing about it until it was too late to save the innocent.

That's not going to happen here in 2005. Not on my watch. There are too many outstanding, highly skilled and dedicated people on our team, and I won't allow it. But if that means I have to let some others go to protect those outstanding employees, I'll do it.

I want you to be one of those who will stay. I want you to be one that will give me their very best. Not just at key times of the week, or every other day, but each and every day on the job.

I know that it goes both ways, and so you'll be seeing me at my best each and every day, too.

If you don't know what I'm looking for, then please come and ask me what I'm expecting. I want to be crystal-clear on the things we'll all need to do, and to be able to measure them accurately. I don't want anyone to be in the dark on whether or not they're doing the right things, or enough of the right things.

I'm excited about what's to be. I'm hopeful that you're going to be a part of it with us.

It's really all up to you. Will you dare to be an extra-ordinary member of our team this year?

Sincerely,
The Boss.

Bill Guertin, Chief Enthusiasm Officer of The 800-Pound Gorilla, works with companies of all sizes to improve their sales, marketing, service skills, and profitability.