

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

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Your Personal Effects

“It’s about time they let him go. They should’ve done it months ago.”

“Whew! She’s finally gone! I thought they’d never get rid of her!”

“I can’t believe she’s gone. How will we ever get along without her?”

“Wow... I can’t even picture this place without him. We’re really going to miss him.”

There’s a room in every workplace where these kinds of conversations happen. Maybe it’s your lunchroom or a break room. Other times it’s in a hallway, or outside in the designated smoking area. It’s the dreaded post-mortem conversations about fellow employees that are no longer fellow employees.

Sometimes the conversations are positive and reassuring. Most often, they’re not. Instead of praise, admiration and good wishes, people prefer to bring out dirty laundry and skeletons from the closet about the people they worked next to that are no longer there.

Let’s imagine for a moment that you’re the one that’s leaving the organization. Maybe you’ve found a better opportunity elsewhere. Maybe you’ve been let go due to downsizing, a department cut, or a restructuring. Whatever the reason, you find yourself cleaning out your desk, putting all your things inside a cardboard box, and you’re gone.

All of a sudden, your once-lively workspace is now an empty cubicle, ready for cleaning and preparing for the new employee.

What did you leave behind?

Oh, your pictures of family and friends are gone, along with that calendar you had on the wall, the list of phone numbers, and a few other things that made your workspace special. But what did you leave for the others to remember you by?

When the new employee comes to work for the first day, and sits in the chair that used to be yours, what will your former co-workers say was the effect that you had on their lives?

On occasion we give reminders to each other in the form of photos, little statues or paperweights, or sometimes greeting cards or thank you cards that were given on a

special day. Other times, the things we leave behind are policies, procedures, or ways of doing things.

But there is something deeper that you should be working on to leave your co-workers. Something they can take with them wherever they go.

The most important thing you can leave behind is a positive impression on someone's life.

Can you remember someone you worked with that said something reassuring to you that you can remember to this day? Maybe it was a phrase or a way of looking at things that has stuck in your mind for a long time. It could have been a supervisor, a co-worker, or even someone in another department.

Is there someone you remember that could always be counted on in a jam? Someone who could create order from chaos, turn a catfight into a dialogue, or come up with a creative solution from out of nowhere?

How about someone who could bring out the best in people? Someone who always found a way to combine the talents of others to make a team that was far greater than any of the individuals in the group?

Or someone who was always generous with their time, their talents, and their willingness to listen? A gifted individual who was always forthright with his or her gifts?

Those who leave an organization in a bad way might leave these kinds of conversations behind: "I could never get her to shut up. She would talk, talk, talk about nothing all day." "The most productive days we ever had were when she wasn't here at all." "He complained about everything all the time. He never lifted a finger to help."

Your goal should be to leave these kinds of thoughts behind:

"I don't think she ever had a bad day. She always made me smile, no matter what." "She was amazing at taking care of the roughest customers. She will be missed." "I can't count the number of positive things he's taught me in the short time I've been around him."

You see, when you stick around long enough, you start to have a personal effect on others.

What personal effects will you be leaving behind?

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