

Of Patriots and Workplaces

Think for a moment about the things you are really proud of.

Maybe it's your grandkids, your pets, your garden, your car, or your home. Or maybe it's an accomplishment you've achieved in life.

If any of those things were to be in danger, what would you do to protect them?

What we treasure-- our pride, our values, our way of life-- are all things worth fighting for. We all felt that when our country was attacked on 9/11. Something we were all very proud of was taken away, and we were united in that grief, united in that resolve, and united in that pride of being an American.

Nobody was divided that day. We were all together. As a team.

If we're so proud of our country, and we would defend our nation so staunchly, then why don't we do the same about the place where we work? Isn't our workplace a little bit of America that resides in each of us each day? Then why don't we defend our workplaces as fiercely as we would our own country?

We call a person that loves their country and what it stands for a Patriot. The definition, according to Webster's, is "a person who loves, supports and defends his country and its interests."

If you were a Patriot for your employer, you would be "a team member that supports and defends their company, speaks proudly of the work they do, and avoids acts that would cause harm to the organization."

Based on this definition, would you call yourself a patriot for your workplace?

Great companies value many of the same things Americans value, such as opportunity, diversity, freedoms, and resources. What we value – and the way we show our values through our actions – determines our level of pride.

If you were truly proud of what you did and whom you did it with, you wouldn't willfully shoot it down.

Or would you?

Unfortunately, many people do every day, and may not know the harm they're doing to themselves and their employer.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Our Constitution allows us to speak freely anywhere, including our workplaces. But freedom of speech is a two-edged sword. Even though we're free to speak our minds, some things that are said at work can be hurtful, damaging, or downright wrong.

Things like bad-mouthing the company, gossiping or spreading rumors, inappropriate conversations for a work environment, personal information given to others, hurtful conversations toward others, and even the tone of voice and emphasis on certain words can cause harm to a company and its reputation.

These negative conversations can lead to higher turnover, less trust, poor work quality, higher frequency of errors, unemployment, and negative "buzz" about the company in the community, among other things.

Workplace Patriots understand this, and speak respectfully and appropriately about their employers. They understand the sensitivity of personal information, and respect their customers and those around them by maintaining their privacy. They also keep their personal opinions about the company and others to themselves.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

We can also express ourselves in our workplaces in any way we choose; in our dress, our choice of jewelry, tattoos, piercings, cologne or perfume, the way we walk and talk, and in many other ways.

Every workplace, however, has its own standards of dress, etiquette, and service. True Patriots understand these standards and abide by them, knowing that they and their fellow team members are affected by the choices they make.

FREE ENTERPRISE

In America, we enjoy the freedom to work and earn a living in the way we choose. And our employers also have the freedom to decide whether to keep us as their employee or not, based on the quality of the work we do.

True Patriots understand this dynamic, and recognize that their employer doesn't owe them a job. They are fortunate to have the opportunity to serve others, and to be rewarded by their wages, as well as the privilege to continue to be employed.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

All these opportunities are things that we can freely choose to do or not to do. Customers can also choose to do business with whomever they want, whether it's you or the competition.

True Patriots understand that business flows to the highest levels of service and value, and they work to make the consumers' choice an easier one in their favor.

Are you a true Patriot for your company? Only those who avoid these negative behaviors and steadily guide themselves and their Company toward the positive uses of our Freedoms can truly be called Patriots.

Our forefathers wrote the Declaration of Independence as a document to officially separate themselves from the British. What's truly needed in every workplace today is a new document, one that recognizes the importance of working together, and the harm that comes when we act as individuals.

What we need is a Declaration of Interdependence.

A promise to speak positively about the workplace and each team member. To speak privately on private matters, and to engage others in positive and meaningful ways at all times. To abide by the expected standards of workplace dress and decorum, and to serve others to the best of their abilities for the good of all. To understand that we are better as a team than any of us are as individuals.

We Americans enjoy the brightest array of freedoms the world has ever known. What's needed today is for more of us to make a conscious decision to exercise our right to become Patriots for the company that employs us.

It's really very simple. Use the freedoms you have, don't abuse them, and do your very best every day.

It doesn't get more American than that.

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