

Cupid in the Workplace: Can Corporations Manage Love [& Lust]

New York, New York, June 1, 2011 ... Mark Matousek calls himself the “ethical guerrilla.” Ever since he published “Ethical Wisdom: What Makes Us Good” Matousek gets contacted 24/7 from around the world. Business leaders want to know how they can prevent an International Monetary Fund, HP, and American Apparel kinds of sexual scandals in their organizations. “We can’t afford those hits to corporate reputation, lawsuits, and diminished productivity,” they tell the ethical guerrilla. They expect Matousek to tame love, lust, and office temptation with some kind of code of conduct.

Matousek is an expert on managing tricky emotions in inappropriate places. That’s because, as he explains in “Ethical Wisdom,” he combines centuries of time-tested wisdom with the latest in scientific research on how we make ethical choices. That mixture shows that human beings are hard-wired for basic goodness. That wiring can and does get frayed when members of the group, be it a global corporation or the knitting circle, lose their connection with each other. The norms are ignored.

“There is nothing erudite about how we become and stay good,” Matousek insists during media interviews and consultations with leaders. “It goes back to what mum and Sister Mary Frances told us. And that’s to avoid bad companions or ‘the near occasions of sin.’ Norms which foster the best interest of everyone will prevail as long as the bad is kept at bay.” Goodness and evil are both contagious.

How to keep the bad out? Based on his research for “Ethical Wisdom,” Matousek has put together a four-step program:

Let workers “feel” the good. Emotion, not the mind, shapes behavior. The pull towards group norms trumps raw self-interest such as wanting to cavort with the long-legged blonde who doesn’t welcome the attention.

Demand growth or “growing up.” Scientists use the term “neuroplasticity” to describe the brain’s ability to change at any age (as opposed to the old “leopard and its spots cliché.”) Yes, corporations can teach old dogs, including top executives, new tricks. Explain that romance is a risk and workers might think through succumbing to Cupid’s arrow. Explain unwanted overtures are reminiscent of a four-year-old being a pest.

Remove the miscreants not open to neuroplasticity. If there are no legal or ethical grounds for firing, then put those who stay stuck in Siberia. Not only is their force field contained. There’s a message about values.

Reward sustained acts of goodness. The objective is to establish and embed healthy group norms. Stability is platform for profitability.

Matousek, who resides in Manhattan, is the author of three other bestsellers: “Sex Death Enlightenment,” “The Boy He Left Behind,” and “When You’re Falling, Dive.” He has written for O: THE OPRAH MAGAZINE, THE NEW YORKER, HARPER’S BAZAAR,

AARP, and the NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE. He began his career working with Andy Warhol on the then-breakthrough publication INTERVIEW.

Matousek [mark.matousek@gmail.com] is available for media interviews, workshops, and lectures. His blog is <http://ethicsguerrilla.typepad.com>.

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