

Management In Real Life

by Kevin Herring

Explosions, suicide attacks, death, terror, heroism, struggle, courage, confusion, worry. These are just a few of the words that describe what happened when terrorists attacked the people of this country last month. Although this is not the first time Americans have been the victims of terrorism in recent years, it is the most devastating and hit the closest to the heart of Americans by its magnitude in destruction and loss of life, proximity to our national symbols of freedom, and its intent to destroy the things we hold dear.

Like most Americans, I watched the horrific scenes as if viewing a Hollywood catastrophe movie, except this time it was real. I heard a young teenager describe the attack scene as “cool,” and I explained that “cool” is what we see on television shows or movies, not what happens when people really die.

I observed others’ responses such as rescue workers who risked and lost their lives trying to save others. I saw strangers comforting strangers and helping the injured to safety. I read about how survivors sought out the injured and helped them escape further tragedy. I learned that heroes on an airplane gave their own lives to save the Capitol and the lives of those inside.

I witnessed employees with all manner of skills taking time off from work and volunteering to help in the rescue efforts: ironworkers, doctors, nurses, and people who just wanted to help any way they could. There were those who cleared rubble, those who searched for survivors, and those who provided water, food, and other support for the rescuers. There were people all across the country who traveled to the site to give their assistance. Many who were unable to work at the attack site worked hard at home to raise money or supplies to send to survivors and rescue workers.

In the wake of the attack, people everywhere seemed to change their focus from the short-term materialistic issues of the day and turned their attention to more human concerns. A resurgence of patriotism and commitment to protecting our liberties ensued. Individuals reflected on the fragility of life, and family members turned to each other for comfort and support. Employees discussed the relationships they had with friends, colleagues, neighbors and family members who perished. Many people, regardless of religious persuasion, turned to spiritual sources for consolation, reassurance, and hope.

Impressively, executives, managers, business people, and front-line workers set aside business to care for those in need. Companies gave employees leaves of absence to provide assistance in the rescue. A deli became a distribution center for food to support rescue workers. A beverage store owner handed out drinks to fleeing survivors and rescue teams. Taxi drivers provided rides for people who had no transportation to return to their homes. A shoe store provided shoes for those who had to make the long walk home with inadequate footwear. Companies across the nation sent dust masks to rescue workers exposed to billowing dust and smoke. Businesses and employees donated millions of dollars in relief funds. Lenders forgave debts owed by the families of those who perished in the attacks.

Regardless of our ability to help in this tragedy, we can all honor those, too numerous to mention, for their benevolent service to those who suffered in these attacks. As we return to our responsibilities at work, let us also continue exemplifying, on a personal basis, the

qualities of the human spirit we have witnessed, so that the humanity of the past month is not lost in the daily transacting of business. Let us remember that the person working in the office or work station above, below, or next to us is a person first - with feelings, emotions, interests, and relationships with families, friends, and co-workers - and a worker second.

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At Ascent we believe that organizations are only as successful as the systems that engage the individuals who work there. Ascent Management Consulting is committed to creating management, culture, organization, and governance systems that enable personal fulfillment and organization effectiveness. Kevin can be reached at 520-742-7300, kevinh@ascentmgt.com, or www.ascentmgt.com.