

Experienced employees keep mum about career goals

by Michael_Kinsman

A new survey finds that most workers aren't candid with their managers about career aspirations.

The poll by the consulting firm Blessing White reports that 56 percent of workers say they seldom or never share their career plans with their employers.

And, the pollsters seemed surprised.

What?

Look at two decades of erosion of job security, layoffs, early retirements and corporate restructurings done for the needs and whims of employers and you wonder how anyone could be surprised.

The workplace is not as friendly as it once was, and workers - who have been told they must take control of their careers - are not as likely to trust companies to serve their best interests.

Blessing White chief executive Christopher Rice notes that the reluctance of individuals to share their career plans with employers handicaps the attempts of companies to develop workers.

"Companies devote considerable resources to career development, but if the great majority of employees won't share their goals one wonders how effective such programs can be," Rice said.

The actions of companies have shown workers that they have to trust themselves, not their employers when it comes to getting ahead.

Everyone has a story of betrayal by their employer at one time or another and most of us have several.

My first one happened when I was a young newspaper reporter on my first job. I had worked at that job for 6 1/2 years, paying for my college education while holding down a full-time job.

I graduated from college and decided it was time to move on. Because it was my first job, I needed references of people I worked with. I went to the managing editor, the same person who had hired me and gave me plenty of opportunities to develop my talent.

I told him I had applied for another job on the other side of the country and that there was interest and he would be called for a recommendation.

The next day the managing editor called a staff meeting, announcing that I was leaving the newspaper and he was taking the opportunity to move people into other jobs. As a result of his realignment, I was demoted.

The managing editor made a capricious and mean-spirited decision without regard to my interests or the loyalty I had demonstrated to the company. I was penalized because I was trying to land a better job.

The Blessing White survey shows that older workers are less likely to share career plans than are younger workers. Seventy-four percent of workers 65 and older won't do that.

The reason should be obvious to all of us. How many older workers do you know who have lost their jobs because of cutbacks or inducements to take early retirement? How many older workers are desperately clinging to their jobs because they know they might never get another one? Or, simply glance at the unemployment rate for workers over the age of 50 and you'll see the reason behind this.

There is no reason to be surprised by this. Workers are acting just as they were taught to act.

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