

# A Special *Character-Wise* Report

19 March, 2012

# Recognize the Symptoms of Resignation



By Joseph Tan  
Good Monday Consulting

## **Introduction**

Resignation is a process, not an event.

In this special *Character-Wise Report*, responsible managers would be wise to recognize symptoms of a pending resignation rather be taken aback when it actually happens. The notion that *prevention is better than cure* applies because the wise manager is the one who takes proactive and pre-emptive steps during the early stages rather than perform damage control when it might be too late. By recognizing these key symptoms, you will undoubtedly build deeper loyalty and improve team morale – which is on the wish-list of every manager.

Beyond this article, the topics of character-based leadership like clear conscience and anger resolution are covered extensively in a two-day workshop for leaders and executives called *Character-Wise Leadership*. Check it out at: <http://www.goodmonday.com/leadership.html>

## **Resignation Symptom #1: OBSERVE PUNCTUALITY**

The character quality of punctuality is defined as *showing esteem for others by doing the right thing at the right time*.

My seriousness in following a leader is reflected in how I use my time – more precisely, *my degree of punctuality reflects the intensity of my passion*. Think about it – would you ever want to be late for an appointment with the Prime Minister? Would you purposefully plan to be late for an important flight? Would you show up late if you are participating in an important tournament?

***The employee who shows consistent signs of tardiness is a likely resignation candidate.***

**Tip for the Alert Manager:** As a manager, you must be an astute observer as to how your employee uses (or misuse) his time at work. Just as how the usage of money reflects a person's priorities, the way a person invest his time will also reveal a fair bit about his character.

Here is a list of observational checklist for the manager to look for in an employee:

1. Does he consistently come to work on time?
2. Does he consistently meet assigned deadlines?
3. Does he consistently attend meetings unprepared?
4. Does he regularly go on MC (medical leave) especially during critical moments?
5. Does he go for long, unaccounted lunch and tea breaks?

## **Resignation Symptom #2: OBSERVE GRATEFULNESS**

The character quality of gratefulness is defined as *letting others know by my words and actions how they have benefited my life*.

My willingness in following a leader depends on whether his leadership creates a beneficial environment of which I am thankful for. I remember a comment from a CEO in my training class – *“the one thing which I cannot stand is unthankfulness.”* When a person is constantly complaining and unthankful, it is a clear sign that he is seeking for greener pastures elsewhere.

***The employee who consistently murmur and complain is a likely resignation candidate.***

Why is gratefulness an important trait? It is linked with the level of energy one brings into the workplace. It is just so much more pleasant to work alongside someone who demonstrates a spirit of thankfulness than someone is constantly griping about how things *should be*.

**Tip for the Alert Manager:** There are two types of employees when it comes to attitude – either one is an *energy-giver* or one is an *energy-taker*. An energy-giver is someone who is grateful and tries her best to make use of what is already there instead of complaining about what is *not* there.

Here is a list of observational checklist for the manager to look for in an employee:

1. When given extra responsibilities, is he full of ideas or full of excuses?
2. When a volunteer is needed, is he usually the one to step forward?
3. When something goes wrong, does he play the blame game or own up to his part?
4. Is he quick to recognize and compliment the effort of others?
5. Does he take time off to help others in need?

### **Resignation Symptom #3: OBSERVE ATTENTIVENESS**

The character quality of attentiveness is defined as *showing the worth of a person or task by giving my undivided attention*.

My commitment to my job is reflected in the level of attentiveness demonstrated. Studies indicate that on the average an employee spends 75 minutes a day making personal use of company technology (internet, phone, etc). At the heart of attentiveness is the commitment to excellence and a job well-done.

***The employee who is distracted and lacking in work urgency is a likely resignation candidate.***

The ability to concentrate is a pre-requisite for quality work. If orders are not taken properly, data not entered correctly and procedures not followed precisely, then it sets off a chain of events that goes far beyond just an isolated incident.

**Tip for the Alert Manager:** Do recognize that a failure to be attentive can be due to a lack of skill and experience – this can be resolved through training. Be on the lookout for a lack of attentiveness which is habitual and is reflective of a non-committal attitude towards work.

Here is a list of observational checklist for the manager to look for in an employee:

1. Is he humble enough to ask for help when in need?
2. Is he aware of what are the critical KPI attached to his job?
3. Does he need to be told what to do every step of the way?
4. Does he take initiative based on his own observations?
5. Does he provide helpful feedback for improvement?

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of these observational checklists is not for you to go around labelling and judging your employees – rather, it is an “alarm” which should cause you to initiate a serious *conversation* with the affected employee. Sometimes it could be a job fit issue and when discussed in a spirit of encouragement and helpfulness, will result in a win-win proposition.

As mentioned, resignation is not an event – rather it is the *cumulative process* of “signals” not observed. It is the intention of the author that the three observational symptoms in this report will sensitize managers to the needs of their employees for *early* intervention so that impending resignation will be transformed into opportunities for greater understanding and job fit.

For a 2-day training which focuses on how you can connect with your team through courageous conversations, check out: <http://www.goodmonday.com/conversations.html>