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Ho‘ohana

Working with intent and with purpose

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Ho‘ohana. Work with intent, work with purpose.

Managers do this for themselves, and they do this for those they manage.

When managers pair employees with meaningful and worthwhile work that is satisfying for them, they will find these employees work with true intention, in sync with the goals of the business.

Be one of those managers.

Hana is the Hawaiian word for work. *Ho‘o* is not a word on its own, but a prefix that brings active causation and transition to the Hawaiian base words that follow it. Therefore, the word *Ho‘ohana* defines a value in which you work with resolve, focus and determination. You are choosing to work with intent. You are choosing to work with a personal mission in mind. Why does this value hold promise for you? Well, for a moment, let’s consider your job itself, and the worth of the time it occupies in your life.

A job or your life?

Once your school days are over and you enter the working

world full-time, you will literally devote a full *third of your life* to the job. There are 24 hours a day. Mindful of your health, you'll spend about 8 hours of that day asleep—that's one third. With a full-time job, you'll spend another 8 hours working—that's another third. That leaves you with only 8 hours left to do what you *want* to do.

Now we both know that you don't really get all of that remaining 8 hours. After all, you have obligations to fulfill, promises to keep, and just, well, stuff to do. You've got to feed the dog, take out the trash, grab some groceries, finish the laundry, service the car, pay the bills, have your teeth cleaned ... the list goes on and on, let's call these the "Being a Human Being" hours. So when all is said and done, exactly how much time do you really have to do the things you want to do?

Well, I don't know how you feel about this, but a measly third of my own life left for me and my personal wants and dreams is just not enough – especially when I come to realize I don't even get the full third! So how can I recapture more of it?

I'm not going to mess around too much with the time I should sleep, for making the investment in good health helps fuel the possibilities of those other 16 hours. It's also pretty difficult to cut back on the stuff that fills the time I need to Be a Human Being, especially the things that deal with my connections to other people—those are part of my wants. For instance I freely and happily spend that time I'm on the sidelines rooting for my son at his high school football game, or that I surprise my husband by cooking dinner (lucky me, he's the chef in our family). I also want to keep that time I joyfully do nothing, and the hours I simply play—going shopping, listening to music, reading a book, or watching a movie. So ... there's only one place left to rethink, reshape, and redesign—that third of my time on the job, at work.

Redefine the word "work" and make it yours

There are far too many negative connotations being spoken in connection with the word "work," when in practice they should overwhelmingly be positive and energizing instead. There can be, and should be, great fulfillment and

pleasure in work. It should feel wonderfully satisfying when you say, "Boy, I really worked hard today." For this to happen, you must work with purpose, and feel that your work is worthwhile.

Work in celebration of your natural strengths, talents, and gifts. Work at something you love doing. Work to fulfill your personal mission. Work to make a difference. Work to serve others well. Work for a cause you deeply care about. Work to leave a legacy. Work to create a better future. Work to deliver a gift to humanity. Do these things, and you *Ho'ohana*. You work passionately and you work intentionally. You work for yourself.

Ho'ohana urges you to indulge in your passion for the pleasures of work by choosing the right work in the first place. You work where and when it enlivens and moves you, and it feels so wonderful to be creative and productive, to celebrate your talent, knowledge and skill. Work becomes that third of your life where you gain meaning, fulfillment and fun. There is absolutely no reason why you cannot work on your own hopes and dreams in sync with the goals and objectives that have been set by your employer. You've just got to take the first essential step, and choose the right job where both can be done. Contrary to popular belief, this is a reality not reserved for entrepreneurs and those who are self-employed: It can be reality for everyone. Why not let it be yours?

What is your passion?

Sit back, try to relax, and see if you can clear your mind for a moment. Now how would you answer this question: What would I want my life's work to be? Or perhaps this is a better question: What would I love to do, often and *intensely*, trusting that I'll somehow get paid for accomplishing it?

I love to teach, and in particular I love coaching managers. I love the science of business and the democracy of free enterprise, where ultimately the customer rules. I love reading, I love the written word and I love the study of how language can influence relationships between people. I love the new global possibilities of networking. I love the notion that we can choose our own destiny and create it. I get passionate about all these things, and by indulging my passions

I gave life to *Managing with Aloha*.

When you choose to live the value of *Ho'ohana*, you choose work that is part of who you are; you enjoy it. You choose meaningful work that is worthwhile and satisfying for you, and thus it can be done with true intention. You choose work that has far greater purpose than punching a clock on time and cashing a paycheck.

You can be a park ranger who just walks his territory routinely, or you can be one who points out wildlife to visitors that they'd miss seeing on their own. You can give them a sense of place—a feel for it, and teach them to respect natural habitats so they may be preserved for future generations. You can flip burgers repetitively at the local fast-food joint, or you can be the next Ray Kroc and study the business opportunity itself. You can figure out how to match your love of great tasting food with production speed, do your own customer research, and learn what it takes to open your own business one day. In my case, I could have been a manager going through the motions of company process, or one determined to discover a better and more noble way, seeking to recognize how people fit into process. In each case both business and employee can win.

These are the teachings to be shared with *Ho'ohana*. Work becomes personal, and it holds personal value, tremendously broadened from the prevalent and frustrating point of view that the work you do on the job is for someone else. The time you are on the job becomes your own again. When you hold a job you love, one that you are convinced will help you realize your personal goals, the paycheck you get every two weeks is icing on the cake, and you join the league of those who say to themselves in wonder, “Imagine, someone is actually paying me to do this!”

The manager as matchmaker

As a manager, you need to let your employees know that this scenario—where they can simultaneously work on their dreams and your business objectives—is entirely possible, and that you are there to support them. They must believe that not

only is it okay to work on their own goals while on the job, as their manager you expect them to and will wholeheartedly encourage them to. Your reward will be a self-motivated employee who reports to work each day ready to tackle the job at hand with enthusiasm.

You can start by asking them the same question I asked you: What is the one thing you would love to do, often and *intensely*, trusting that I'll pay you for accomplishing it? Employees need your permission to make their jobs personal. They need to hear you to say, "That's great! I'd love to have you do that for me!"

Once you've matched job to employee, you explain why the performance desired from that job is so vitally important to you and to the success of the company. You create a picture of work with tremendous worth and significance, work that you have faith in them to do, and do well. Work you fully expect them to put their signatures on.

Start from the beginning: the job interview

Therefore, as a manager, this discussion was a part of the hiring process I conducted with every prospective candidate. The concept of *Ho'ohana* was taught to them in their first interview with me, and when I asked them to tell me about their personal goals, I was looking for a connection between their goals and my business objectives.

And there was nothing secretive or manipulative about it. My motives were on the table to be discussed, and we became a task force of two with the same mission: figuring out if their goals and my job offering, including the business objectives inherent within it, were a match. I'd explain that they did have a choice—there were other jobs out there besides the one I happened to have available, and for the sake of their own lives they needed to choose wisely. For if they chose to pursue this job with me, the expectation would be that each and every day they would *Ho'ohana*, they would work with intent, and they would work with purpose.

I clearly remember an interview I conducted for a young man applying for a job as a server attendant in one of our resort

restaurants. I was his final hurdle to securing this job, for as his potential division head I conducted final interviews. The finals were designed to dig deeper for any red flags my department managers may have missed in their earlier interviews with candidates, eager as they usually were to get vacancies filled as quickly as possible. I was looking forward to meeting this young man, for my food and beverage director was excited about him, excited enough to prowl the hall outside waiting for me to finish the interview and sign on the dotted line of approval so a job offer could be made.

It was not to be. I was excited about him too, and the young man got a job with us, but not as a server attendant. During the interview, I had uncovered his *Ho'ohana* for the strategic planning of business itself. He valued his independence on the job, feeling he normally worked a quicker pace than most of his peers. He was most proud of his ability to accept responsibility and deliver more than was expected, and he loved coming up with new and different answers to things. He totally enjoyed it when he could have “real conversations” with customers over and above simply serving them. He didn't know too much about us, and food and beverage would've simply been a way for him to pay his bills until he had “got his foot in the door and figured things out.” Sound familiar?

I delivered him to another division with my recommendation that he fill a vacancy we had for residential services, a department that had just been established on our growing resort and had been urgently needed. There was much to be accomplished there in a very short amount of time, and this was exactly the kind of person they needed to help them create and build a new department from scratch, one that set its priorities with a highly sensitive ear to what the customer wanted. Today he is one of their success stories; his instinctual performance opened opportunities to serve the customer and helped define the department's future goals. He loves his job.

My food and beverage director was right in his assessment that this young man had depth of character, would be reliable, would be loved by our customers, and “looked the part.” However his passion wasn't a fit for the position, and his potential wasn't the best match for any stepping stones

possible within food and beverage. He would have been a short term player in our restaurant, just another turnover statistic waiting to happen, and a lost opportunity for the resort.

Early investments for long-term returns

I'd encourage you to stop here and spend some time considering your own interviews for prospective candidates for your business. I can imagine what you're thinking, that it already takes a lot of time for you to interview people, and what I've suggested here are additions that will require even more time. Yes they will. We haven't spoken at all about determining availability, aptitude and basic qualifications, and those character-seeking questions you've learned to ask throughout your own career. And I'm not suggesting those aren't important, or should be overlooked. What I am saying is that if you are going to hire people and manage them well, *uncover their intent* and whether there's a fit within your business goals *before* you waste their time or yours any further. Like my new hire for residential services, you want to get it right the first time.

You can also do it more creatively and effectively than solely investing in long hours of back-to-back interviews. I'll give you an example: My daughter recently got a job with a retail store that schedules prospective candidates for two-hour final interviews actually working unpaid on the shop floor helping customers in whatever way they can. I'll admit that at first I thought it odd and somewhat nervy, but I became intrigued with the idea, sure there was a method to learn about here. When my daughter shared her experience with me, I began to see it as a truly fabulous approach: I wish I'd used the same strategy when I'd hired my own retail clerks!

This is a retail operation that prides itself on sensing what customers need and how they like to be helped, and then delivering these things to them in a highly personal and individual manner. Either my daughter was going to demonstrate she could instinctively initiate quick connections with people, or not. No prior training was needed to test if she really was warm and fuzzy with customers; in those two hours, this

genuine ability would prove to be part of her character or it wouldn't. Her own interest in their product they sold and her feelings about it would be readily apparent to the "interviewer" that discreetly watched her engage with both product and customer.

Testing the reliability of their service has since become a game with me, and a validation of sorts that good service is out there. I'll visit the White House, Black Market wherever their shops intersect with my travels. They never disappoint me.

Think of your employees as business partners

In my own interviews *Ho'ohana* would be the foundation of an alliance between me and candidate, a collaboration that helped with my match making by uncovering the passion people had for the work they do. With these first conversations our professional relationship began, based on the honesty with which candidates shared personal goals with me, and my honesty on the connection I saw—or truthfully did not see—between their goal and our mutual business success.

Yes, *mutual* success. Not only would we be manager and staff, boss and employee, we would be business partners. There has to be a win in the partnership for both the business and the employee. And do not underestimate the power there is in the simple fact that an employee enjoys what he does every day. When you enjoy something you don't want to give it up. When employees love their role in your company, they nurture a growing interest in your success, understanding that they have much greater job security in a healthy business. They will work with you to ensure that health (translation: the numbers!—the bottom line you need and want). And they will go one step further: When they have passion for what they do, they put up a hand that beckons you to involve them even more. In essence they are saying, "Let me work on the business too, not just in it."

Ho'ohana helps define lifelong passions

Change is inevitable, and the personal and individual meaning of *Ho'ohana* will evolve over time. It will evolve over

the future course of an employee's working career in a company, and it will evolve in its link with personal dreams. It's a good thing if their interests grow and change—you've intrigued and engaged them! Thus the hiring process is but one example, and managers need to keep up with staff as their passions grow and their purpose is more clearly defined for them.

My own purpose today is not the same as it was in other stages of my career and my life. For most of my working life, I was content to hold a job in the corporate environment, wanting to be in the thick of things where I could have maximum exposure to my industry network and learn as much as I could from them. The intellectual meanderings of the business mindset fascinate me, and business is complex and diverse; I wanted to play the field and I could travel between different industries. I wanted an experimental playground to work out my theories, and I wholeheartedly shared the business passions of my company's owner, making them my own to actively strengthen my own beliefs. Today my purpose is to remain self-employed and work for myself and my family, giving 100 percent of my energies to my passion for bringing nobility to management by sharing these lessons of *Aloha*. I am thrilled with the effect this decision has had on my personal life.

There were many times I was not articulate about what I wanted, and wondered if my boss really wanted to talk to me about my dreams. The beauty of *Ho'ohana* is that once it is part of the language it makes it easier to talk about: It's not weird or uncomfortable for an employee to hear their manager talk to them about their "passion" and their "purpose" so they can "work with intent." And this match making is not that difficult; I've long lost count of the times an employee said to me, "I've never had a manager who listens to me like you do." Most times having the conversation in the first place and then listening well was all it took. You learn to ask the right questions and stop talking, waiting patiently for *their* answers to fill the silence.

When *Ho'ohana* is incorporated into the vocabulary of your company, it frames the future conversations you'll have. It gets you into people's heads. It helps you make job assignments

for projects, and it helps you assign roles on teams and task forces. It helps you counsel someone considering a promotion or transfer. Sometimes it gets you into your own head: It will simply help you get unstuck, when you find you are asking yourself, “Now why was I doing this in the first place?” You look for intent, for reason, for logic, for purpose.

And here’s something wonderful: You’ll find you’re not the Lone Ranger with this. I would hear employees ask each other, “Is this *Ho‘ohana* for you? Why?” as a means of wanting to understand how they could help each other work as a team. I’d find that they switched job assignments on their own initiative and with better results, wanting to experiment with a different role or learn a new task. Sometimes their meaning behind the question was, “Do you *hana* (just work), or do you *Ho‘ohana* (work with intent)?” It was a wake-up call they gave each other, a subtle way of keeping each other focused and equally committed. The honest employee who told me “this is not *Ho‘ohana* for me anymore” did me a favor, diagnosing boredom and complacency that would otherwise turn into a cancer had I missed seeing it for myself.

This has been my experience: When *Ho‘ohana* would equate to working on someone’s goals and objectives, their job tasks would easily be prioritized – either the task was conducive to the achievement of a goal or it wasn’t. Options in decision making were more easily evaluated and assessed—the right decision was the one that brought us closer to our target, our purpose. And these were the decisions that charted action that was clear, purposeful and without hesitation. These were the decisions leading to action that mattered, for with *Ho‘ohana* those actions defined intentional work the employee believed was both important to the company and worthwhile for him.

As manager, share your *Ho‘ohana* too

As the saying goes, let your left hand know what the right hand is doing. There was another critical part of the interview process I’ve described to you. As the prospective candidate’s future manager, I would share my own job intent, and describe

how my *Ho‘ohana* (my purpose) was to be their teacher and coach, not their babysitter. I described the passion I had for my own job, and for the goals of the company. Should I then make the decision to hire them, we’d hit the ground running, and they’d know my intent from the very first day.

Often I had candidates remark, “This has been a really great conversation, not like an interview at all.” Those comments were great acknowledgement for me, first that they were receptive and we’d connected, and second that they could now anticipate what our future conversations would be like: They’d be ready to collaborate.

We’d meet again on their first day of work. Now that they were part of my *‘Ohana in business* (think team for now) I let them know what they could expect from me on a daily basis. I would purposefully and clearly lay the groundwork for the professional relationship needed for us to both be successful. I told them directly how they’d come to earn my trust, and how I’d work toward earning theirs. I wanted them to discard any prior notions they had of what it was like to “work with the boss” and expect a new and different relationship—a better one. When you hire someone, do they know where you stand, and how they’ll be expected to work *with* you?

Ho‘ohana gives managers the opportunity to tell their employees where they are coming from. It gives managers a forum to explain why they do what they do, and how their own roles are separate yet complementary. Please, do not be one of those managers with employees who say, “Frankly I’m not really sure what it is my boss does.” *Ho‘ohana* was spoken with my staff on an ongoing regular basis: They had the right to know what I was doing and why. They counted on me to share my own passion and inspire them—you can’t be shy about this when you’re the boss! Remember, they are your business partners, and they need to share your purpose if they are to take intentional actions that matter.

The fullness of work that is Ho‘ohana

Ho‘ohana can open the door to intriguing new conversations for you.

Ask prospective candidates about their true intent. Venture into their passions. Learn to listen well, and establish relationships that will build your collaboration in the future. Ask the questions of *Ho'ohana* and then stop talking; Wait patiently for answers to fill the silence and lead you.

Ask the employees you have right now: it's never too late. Bring *Ho'ohana* into the vocabulary of your work day. Have *Ho'ohana* be your philosophy for giving them meaningful assignments and responsibilities that match up with the things they love to do anyway. Encourage passionate performance.

Ask yourself: do I *Ho'ohana*? As a manager you affect many others, and you must accept the responsibility inherent in this. You start by taking care of yourself first. If you are in a job you do not love, find the one you *will* love, or figure out how to indulge your passion and be in business for yourself. Your life is far too precious to be mired in the routine of work without purpose, intent or passion.

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