

The Future is for Innovators and Artisans

Dr. John Sullivan, a professor at San Francisco State University in the Business school, and a highly paid consultant for business leaders, introduces himself as a “provocateur” and leaves an impression that, in the changing world where return on investment is all, there will be three choices for America’s new workforce: 1) join the new human workforce experiment surging in the latest greatest companies (Facebook, Google, Apple, etc.) where new employees are expected to be, and are treated like “stars” to sharpen focus on leading edge ideas with an intention to self regulate, collaborate, and innovate, and make lots of money for both the corporation and the self; or 2) be a productive artisan in business for oneself with a healthy work/lifestyle balance that includes family and communities of practice; or 3) do both: innovate for a couple of years until prosperous, then buy yourself a small business and settle down with a family.

Armed with a PowerPoint presentation full of metrics for the best corporations, Dr. Sullivan wows us with stats on revenue earned per employee at big industry giants Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Apple. He compares the ROI of these companies to that earned by previous giants IBM and Microsoft. He points out

differences between the old workforce rules and the new. And he provides data to show why the new methods are winning.

Employee as innovator is a new theme. Gone is the social contract, the need for an education, and evidence of productivity in this new world. Present is the harnessing of intentional human power working synergistically, collaboratively toward synthesis of original ideas brought to market that reveal a large-scale workforce experiment in progress. And Dr. Sullivan is paid \$10,000 per lecture, to reveal the particulars of how this works.

In this new world, corporations are not obligated to provide community services in exchange for their right to operate in this country. They have no interest in conversations that involve development for an older workforce, nor investment in work/life balance issues. No, their workers don't even have to have a degree. All they need is a commitment from their workers to ignore the fact that they exist in a human behavioral lab experiment, and to agree to provide a constant focus on innovation and collaboration day and night, with no distractions. In return, they get fed; they get a boatload of amenities; and they get rich.

So what is wrong with that? I think this could work out to motivate the younger set to actually become self-regulated learners and to develop self esteem, which will be required if they go for option three: building a family, running a small business and delivering on promises. I am sure these new workers can burn out over time, but if they are making money for both themselves as well as their company, and if they can choose to quit and start a small business in their own communities, that could be the answer to America's revenue problem. The more small businesses, the more tax revenue can be collected for the common good.

Unfortunately, these new workforce developments pretend no interest in the continuing obligation to contribute to the general community for the right to operate in our country. They will no longer invest in social contracts and will continue the moral disengagement from those older workers loyal to ideals sold to them in the past in exchange for their labor. Dr. Sullivan makes it clear that the only option for older workers, and non-stars, are to go artisan, while he also admits that most small businesses fail. I am excited that my projects may be able to help the artisan to have the tools he/she needs to prosper as well.

References

PowerPoint presentation; notes