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12 Universal Workplace Gifts of Peace and Affirmation for Stressful Times

The Roundtable's Message:

***Help Each Other Cope With The Perceived Threats And Nervous Images Of SARS,
The War In Iraq And The Uncertainty Of Life At Work***

By Bill Wilkerson
Roundtable Co-Founder and CEO

Toronto, April 8, 2003 -- Editors, Reporters, Producers – In response to a large number of inquiries, the Roundtable is publishing this “gift list” for employers and employees in Canada, U.S. and Europe. This was part of a speech by Bill Wilkerson to the Conference Board of Canada in Toronto recently.

The Roundtable is a business alliance dedicated exclusively to mental health and addiction issues—and as a network of CEOs, senior business executives and health professionals, champions a goal to prevent the disability effects of stress, depression and anxiety in the labour force.

12 Workplace Gifts of Peace and Affirmation For Stressful Times

1. The Gift of Helping Out

Really go out of your way these days to ask your neighbor at work if he or she need help.

Employers: assist your people get off the treadmill at work.

2. The Gift of Clear Expectations

Employers and managers: make doubly sure your people know what you expect of them these days. Unclear job expectations create the kind of tension and uncertainty that grinds people down.

3. The Gift of Job Fulfillment

Bosses, remember this: a pay cheque buys bread for the table. Job fulfillment buys bread for the soul. Go out of your way to help make sure your employees have the tools and the time they need to do the job they are qualified to do. We all want to do a good job. And feel good about it.

4. The Gift of Sharing Success Not Just Work

Co-workers: share the credit for the things that get done well at work and not just the workload itself. Cheer each other on. Let the boss know who really helped you out today.

5. The Gift of E-Mail Ceasefires

Everybody, the next time you are about to e-mail a neighbor at work, don't. Go visit them. The casualties of stress mount daily from information overload and floods of abrupt or uninvited e-mails.

6. *The Gift of Liberation From Call-Forwarding*

For all of our sakes, delete useless call forwarding messages. They seldom live up to the promise of a “real person” at the end of the line. Instead, leave a welcoming invitation – in your own voice – and invite the caller to leave an informative message. And call them back.

7. *The Gift of Inclusion*

More than ever, make sure your neighbors and employees at work are included in meetings, going to lunch, sharing information. A lot of us feel alone these days in the midst of many.

8. *The Gift of Casual Chat*

These days, ask your neighbor at work how they feel about something that’s important to them. Say hello on the elevator. Bring the casual chat back to a hurried and worried work place.

9. *The Gift of Listening*

Give this gift to someone everyday.

10. *The Gift of Trust*

Managers: stop breathing down the neck of your employees. Let them know you believe in them. Co-workers, go out of your way to show your neighbors at work that you can be trusted and try hard to trust other people yourself.

11. *The Gift of Being Home*

In these nervous times, employers may find their people thinking overtime about their kids and their families, wanting to be home when the children come home from school. Respect this. And double-check the work deadlines your people are operating under. Are they reasonable, even necessary? Also, do something else. Be alert to the emotional commitment certain of your employees may have to an ill child or elderly parents at home or in hospital. And the time and understanding they need to manage that commitment.

12. *The Gift of Fairness*

Go the extra mile to make sure what you do is fair to others and seen to be fair in their eyes. Cut out clubbyness, gossip and speculation wherever you find it at work.

A Word To Politicians

In many ways, you are the public face of these times. Give these 12 gifts to the people you represent and to your employees. In doing so, a special plea:

- Turn down the rhetoric, stop yelling at each other, cool your anger and speak plainly to people.
- Government employees need these twelve gifts as much as anybody. Your workplaces are among the most toxic and stressful. You have a responsibility to change that. More on this another day.

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