

Thank God It's Monday!

An Interview with Roxanne Emmerich

Monday, July 13th, 2009

Roxanne Emmerich is the author of *Thank God it's Monday!: How to Create a Workplace You and Your Customers Love*. And, as it's Monday today, I thought I'd ask her about her new book and what we can do to make turning up to our projects more inspiring. One of the key things in the TGIM mentality is thinking positive and changing your own attitude.

Roxanne, I can understand how an attitudinal change will make yourself feel better and approach work more positively. But how can you make this change spread to the point where everyone on the project team feels the same?

That's why an intervention is helpful. When you get an entire group together at the same time and say, "Hey, we could be having much more fun. Let's make some agreements to decide to bring levity to our days and celebrate successes. Let's also agree to stop whining and have a code when someone breaks that rule that requires us all to stop whining and use advancing language. Let's also agree we won't gossip or give excuses. Are you all in agreement that we're going to do that?"... that can change everything. When people give their word to stop being energy vampires, everything changes for the better.

What's your top tip for making change stick? How do you stop people going back to their old ways?

It's called 'calling it tight.' People seem to believe that only managers should say something when someone breaks a code of how to treat customers or each other but that's archaic, ineffective, and WAY too slow. Instead, every person should own the power that they can, and in fact, are required to, do exactly that.

With a cross-cultural team it's hard to be inclusive with celebrations. For example, I have worked with disabled colleagues who couldn't join in certain events, and people whose religious beliefs prevented them from coming to the pub for a drink after work. How can project leaders make sure that when they celebrate success, everyone is included?

A little forethought and sensitivity goes a long way... but people don't get offended when they know you have the best of intentions. That's why a culture shift is necessary so that people don't make mountains out of mole hills.

What's the most common cause of conflict in teams and how should project managers address this?

For project managers, the biggest problem has to be excuses – "I didn't get it done on time because..." One of the best things a project manager can say is "Don't tell me about the labor pains... show me the baby." Ask that if a person is running late, they let you know BEFORE missing a deadline AND tell you the massive corrective action plan. Let them know that an excuse does not, and never will, equal a result.

Project managers often need to learn quickly: we are never experts in a subject when the project starts. How can we build credibility to help foster those principles of business that you cite: values, accountability, trust?

People will walk through walls for you when they know you are a good human and that you care about them. ALWAYS start there. Let them know your agreements about how you will treat them and ask for agreements about how they will treat you. It feels better already, doesn't it? Being up front makes a huge difference.

Not everyone loves projects and the change they bring. When you are trying to create change, how can you deal with the unhelpful attitudes, for example people who withhold information because they think it helps them be more powerful?

Call the "baditude" for what it is. And try "the conversation" as outlined in the book. Any person can have that conversation that says, "I'm really excited about where this team is going and my sense is you don't share that excitement... and that's okay. But if this isn't your thing, you need to go find your thing!" Let them make a decision and let them know you care about them to make a decision.

Let it be known that withholding information is career limiting, if not ending. Any person who is willing to hurt their team to push themselves ahead is a ticking time bomb.

Project managers understand 'beingship' – leadership without the position authority. It's about getting people to leap over tall buildings in a single bound just because you asked. If you allow crazy and dysfunctional behavior, you won't be able to make great things happen and life will get a big miserable and fast. Take a stand and bring out into the open all their messes to clean them up or they will be the death of you.

Read the review of [Thank God it's Monday!](#) here on Wednesday, when I'll also be reminding you how you can get your hands on a copy.