Your 2014 Spartan Resolution: Resolve to Exemplify Spartan Courage in the Workplace

Being a true Spartan requires commitment and courage – especially if you are a Spartan at work. Daily work responsibilities and interactions can easily turn into moments that call for everyday acts of courage. It takes courage to act in spite of being fearful, anxious or uncomfortable.

Consider the following examples of times when courage may be necessary in the workplace:

- An employee knows that a colleague (who is also a personal friend) is taking unapproved breaks. Other employees are picking up the workload, putting stress on the entire unit.
- An employee observes that a colleague is uncomfortable with the jokes being told around her by other employees, and they tease her when she asks them to stop.
- An employee is asked by his supervisor to run a personal errand for him off campus on work time.
- A supervisor is looking for a volunteer to be assigned to learn a new skill and train the rest of the unit.
- A supervisor gave public feedback to a direct report who acted with good intent but got an unexpected result. This has caused embarrassment and morale issues among the staff.

And what if you are a supervisor? Supervising staff can be an ongoing exercise in courage. The best supervisors regularly demonstrate everyday acts of courage.

Take for example several common issues faced by supervisors in the workplace:

- A supervisor sees a developing substance abuse problem with a staff member.
- A director has recently heard several similar complaints from staff about their supervisor.
- An employee with an ongoing but undocumented performance issue was transferred to the supervisor.
- A supervisor needs to change the procedures and duties in a unit and several employees have been vocal in their opposition.
- Two employees in a unit are not getting along and are not responding to coaching.

Many of these issues eventually find their way to the Employee Relations office. By the time they get to that level, frustrations are high, critical time has been lost, work relationships are splintered, and behaviors that might have been corrected early on with little impact on a career have now become unmanageable. At this point, the pressure to take action is high and options are limited.

Now ask yourself “How would the ‘Spartan Experience’ be improved if people were showing up to work each day with a commitment to Spartan courage?” This year, when you are called on to do something which makes you uncomfortable, resolve to do the right thing – even if you can’t predict the outcome. Draw on one of the following types of courage...

“Try” Courage – the courage to take action or initiative. Examples include accepting a new position, or doing something which will be difficult and time consuming.
“Trust” Courage – the courage to resist the temptation to control other people. Examples of trust courage in the workplace include delegation and sharing information.

“Tell” Courage – the courage of voice. Speak the truth no matter how difficult the truth may be for others to hear. Say what needs to be said even if it involves acknowledging your own mistakes.

Remember that the everyday Spartan courage you show in the workplace is necessary for the continued success of MSU. If you have a specific issue that you would like help with, or you would like training or resources for learning how to be courageous at work, contact Employee Relations at 517-353-5510, or Organization Development at 517-355-0183.