The Least Common Denominator Management Theory

Do you have a team or division where the turnover ratios aren't matching the rest of the company over an extended period of time? Is there a division which has consistent personnel issues and the culture seems different than the rest of the company –basically it breeds negativity?

Go back to elementary school math and find the least common denominator (LCD):

- If not readily available, have your HR team provide you a list of all the employees in that division/team;
- Get the list of the terminated employees by year in the division and cause of terminations;
- Look for the least common denominator to all the terminations

You will not be surprised by what you find but it's a hard truth to face. You probably already know this manager is a problem but in business (and life) we find ways to protect certain people by justifying their actions based on customer desires, productivity, rain making, etc…to the detriment of so many others. We don't admit to ourselves they are the LCD.

The numbers don't lie.

We've all seen the statistics on costs of turnover and negative energy on our organizations. While we can argue the true costs of productivity loss and ramp up time depending on positions, its clear there are large scale hard dollar costs of turnover as well as cultural and environmental costs which are hard to quantify. The worst of which is the disenfranchisement of good employees and de-motivation of watching under-performing employees skate by and managers letting it happen. Once the good employee doesn't care anymore they are lost and it's nearly impossible to bring them back into the fold. Eventually they leave. How many good employees have to leave before you recognize the LCD and do something about it?

As a manager myself, it's hard to admit that our employees more likely than not leave because of what we did as managers. It's our style, our philosophy, our handling of difficult and diverse situations that determines how our employees view us. The organization tries to implement a certain culture and code but individual managers remain the front line to creating the environments for our employees.

Look across your organization and see if you have an LCD and address it sooner than later; the longer this person is entrenched in your organization the worse the overall effect.

Find and address your LCDs, we all have them.