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An Open Letter To The Industry I Love: The World Changes, But a Rep's Commitment Does Not

Rarely do I pass on the things that I see on the internet, but the following "letter" made so much sense, and was so spot-on, that I could not pass it up. This is my adaptation, but it could have been written by a typical rep business owner here in the U.S., so let's presume it is genuine. We care not; the story has a value of its own and its point is clear, very clear. I trust you will agree that it is worth the read.

To ALL MY VALUED EMPLOYEES:

There have been some rumblings around the office about the future of this rep company, and more specifically, your job. As you know, the economy has changed for the worse and it presents many challenges. However, the good news is this: The economy doesn't pose a threat to your job. What does threaten your job is the greed of many Wall Street players and the financial institutions that employ them. However, let me tell you a few factual tidbits which may help you decide what is in your best interest.

First, while it is easy to spew rhetoric that denigrates employers, one has to understand that for every business owner there is a Back Story. This back story is often neglected and overshadowed by what you see and hear. Sure, you see me park my Lexus outside. You've seen my beautiful home at last year's Christmas party. I'm sure all these flashy symbols of luxury conjure up some idealized thoughts about my life. However, what you don't see is the BACK STORY:

I started this company 36 years ago without two cents to rub together. At that time, I lived in a 900 square foot studio apartment for 3 years. My entire living space was converted into an office so I could put forth 100% effort into

building a company, which, by the way, would eventually employ you. My diet consisted of Ramen Pride noodles and fast food because every dollar I spent went back into this company. I drove a rusty Chevy with a defective transmission. I didn't spend ample time with my wife and 3 kids after giving birth to the business. Often times, I stayed home on weekends while my friends went out partying. In fact, I was married to my business – hard work, discipline, and sacrifice.

Meanwhile, my friends had traditional jobs. They worked 40 hours a week and made a modest \$50K a year and spent every dime they earned. They drove flashy cars and lived in expensive homes and wore fancy designer clothes. Instead of hitting Nordstrom's for the latest hot fashion item, I was strolling through discount stores purchasing clothing that didn't look like it was born in the '70's. My friends refinanced their mortgages and lived a life of luxury. I, however, did not. I put my time, my money, and my life into a business with a vision that eventually, some day, I too, will be able to afford these luxuries my friends supposedly had.

So, while you physically work from 8:30 AM, and then stop at 5:00 PM, I don't. There is no "off" switch for me.

When you leave the office, you are done and you have a weekend all to yourself. Unfortunately, I do not have that freedom. I eat and breathe this company every minute of the day.

There is no rest. There is no weekend. There is no happy hour.

Every day this business is attached to my hip like a 1 year old special-needs child. You, of course, only see the fruits of that garden – the nice house, the Lexus, the vacations . . . you never realize the Back Story and the sacrifices I've made.

Now that the economy is in shambles and I, the guy that made all the right decisions and saved his money, have to bail-out all the people who didn't. The people that overspent their paychecks suddenly feel entitled to the same luxuries for which I sacrificed three decades of my life. Yes, business ownership has its benefits, but the price I've paid is steep and not without wounds. Unfortunately, the cost of running this business, and employing you, is starting to eclipse the threshold of marginal profit and let me tell you why. I am being taxed to death and the government thinks I don't pay enough. I have state taxes, federal taxes, property taxes and sales taxes. Also, how can I forget the ever present

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payroll taxes like worker's camp, unemployment camp and Medicare? I had to hire a bookkeeper and an accountant to manage all these taxes and then guess what I had to pay taxes for employing them as well.

Almost forgot, I pay a nexus tax for the privilege of selling into every state within our territory. In the event you never gave it that much thought, it is often TRIPLE taxation on a single sale. That's right, the manufacturer, the rep and, when involved, the distributor all pay tax on the same transaction.

Our government's tax regulations are very costly and time consuming. Recently, I wrote a six figure check to the US Treasury to cover quarterly payroll taxes. You know what my "stimulus" check was? Zero, Nada, Zilch! The question I have is this, "Exactly who is stimulating the economy?" I say it's small business owners like us reps who fuel the engine of change. Or, is it the unemployed single mother with 14 kids sitting at home with her recent litter of eight infants? Could she possibly be contemplating her next IVF pregnancy while waiting for her next welfare check? (Sorry, I could not control myself.) Is she benefiting the economy? How about the 14 million illegal immigrants? Are they helping? Enough of that, the answers are obvious.

Our leaders feel that the economic stimulus package was warranted, and I agree. However, I wish that we started by recapturing the billions of dollars bankers paid themselves. I also have issues with the former entrusted captains of Freddie Mac and Fannie MAE along with the banking community that we hard working taxpayers are now bailing out. The same applies to the oil company profiteers.

The fact is, if I took 50% of your paycheck you'd quit and would not work here. I mean, why should you? That's nuts. Who wants to be rewarded only 50% for their hard work? Well, this is the very reason why your job is in jeopardy. Here is what many of you don't understand . . . to stimulate the economy you need to stimulate what runs the economy. Had the government suddenly mandated to me that I no longer needed to pay taxes, guess what? Instead of depositing taxes into the Washington black-hole, I would have spent it by

hiring more employees, which would stimulate economic growth. My employees would have enjoyed the wealth of that tax cut in the form of promotions and better salaries. But you can forget it now. By the way, what is the wrong with a flat tax system? I hope that you'll support the candidates in future elections who promote this sensible concept.

When you have a comatose man on the verge of death, you don't defibrillate and shock his thumb thinking that will bring him back to life, do you? Or, do you defibrillate his heart? Business is at the heart of America and always has been. To restart it, you must stimulate it with jobs, ideally in the manufacturing sector, and not kill it by outsourcing.

So where am I going with all of this? It's quite simple. If any new taxes are levied on me, or my company, my reaction will be swift. I'll be forced to fire all of you. You can then plead with the government to pay for your mortgage, your SUV, and your child's future education. Frankly, it won't be my problem any longer. Then, I will close this company down, move to another country and retire. You see, I'll be done. I'm fed up with a country that penalizes the productive and gives to the unproductive. I'm tired of a government that has passively stood by while corporations outsource millions of jobs in the name of profit.

If nothing changes, I fear my motivation to work and to provide jobs will be destroyed. So, if you lose your job, it won't be at the hands of the economy, it will be at the hands of a greedy hurricane that swept through this country, steamrolled the constitution, and hopefully, has not changed its landscape forever. If that happens, you can find me sitting on a beach, retired, and with no employees to worry about. On the other hand, I'll do everything in my power to keep our company whole in order to best serve our principals, customers and provide for you and your families.

One last thing, please support our President; he needs all the help he can get. He didn't get us into this mess, but he'll surely need help in getting us out of it.

Signed, your concerned but optimistic boss.

Disclaimer: This article was sent to stimulate thought and is not necessarily the opinion of the author.

