



What's Right in Healthcare

Unlocking the FEAR Foothold

featuring Quint Studer

Recently, I heard something that really resonated: FEAR is nothing more than *Fantastized Experiences Appearing Real*. Another version is *False Expectations Appearing Real*, but I think I prefer the first one. It's what I see going on around me every day.

Healthcare, like other industries, is feeling the brunt of the recession. Layoffs and downsizings *are* happening. But far more are happening in people's minds than are happening in reality. *Fantastized* firings. That's where much of the pain is coming from.

If you have 8,000 employees and you're considering laying off 50 of them, that's reality. Yet, what's *not* happening in reality-but only in the minds of the 7,950 employees who ultimately won't get fired-has more of a negative impact than what *is* happening.

Anxious employees aren't at the top of their game. They aren't engaged. They aren't executing their goals or providing the extraordinary patient care needed in this tough economy. Paralyzed by fear, they simply *can't* be.

What can leaders do to alleviate the fear and get employees back on task? The answer is three-pronged.

Be straight with your employees about the external environment and how it's shaping the internal reality. *Transparency* is the currency of trust. Yet, sometimes leaders try to cushion people from reality. They say, "Let *me* worry about that. *You* just do *your* job." This is a mistake. *Of course* people will worry. They'd be foolish not to. And the less they know, the more they worry.

If cuts will be made, tell employees what's coming. Identify which areas will be heavily impacted, slightly impacted, not impacted at all. Fear comes from ambiguity and vagueness. Communicate what you know as soon as you know it: clearly, frequently, and company-wide.

Lay out your get-through-the-recession plan. Make sure people understand their role in it. If all of your employees don't know you have a game plan, then you *don't* have a game plan. Everyone *must* buy into the plan and execute their part. Underscore the fact that everyone must stay engaged and focused on doing their best work, every day.

Remind people they have "the right stuff" to weather this storm. Healthcare professionals are a smart, resilient group. As an industry, we've gotten through bad times before. Your organization has likely overcome some tough challenges, too. Remind people of that and you'll help them envision the light at the end of the tunnel.

The anxiety employees are feeling is really just energy. It *can* be harnessed and directed into productive channels. That's one of the recession's hidden gifts. It forces all of us to work harder, work smarter, and pull together to make an already great industry even greater.

About Quint Studer: Quint Studer not only teaches it, he has done it. After leading organizations to breakthrough results, Quint formed Studer Group®, an outcomes firm that implements evidence-based leadership systems that help clients attain and sustain outstanding results. He was named one of the "100 Most Powerful People in Healthcare" by *Modern Healthcare* magazine for his work on institutional healthcare improvement. Studer was named "Master of Business" by *Inc.* magazine. He is the author of *BusinessWeek* bestseller *Hardwiring Excellence: Purpose, Worthwhile Work, Making a Difference*; *101 Answers to Questions Leaders Ask*; and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller *Results That Last: Hardwiring Behaviors That Will Take Your Company to the Top*. For more information, visit www.studergroup.com.