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Executives suffer “Departure Guilt” in midst of mergers

Leadership development expert addresses new phenomenon in economic downturn

In a time of mergers, acquisitions and layoffs, it's common to find employees suffering “Survivor Guilt” – the angst of keeping ones jobs while watching colleagues pack their desks into boxes and leave. The other side of the story is the emerging phenomenon of “Departure Guilt” – leaving for a new company after your current employer has invested heavily in your development.

For example, a vice president at a major technology company is in the middle of an extensive executive leadership development process while his company goes through acquisition. He'll probably be leaving soon and feels ambivalent about continuing to accept his current employer's investment.

“I'm trying to help him get over his Departure Guilt and accept the leadership development he's now getting,” says Dr. Karen Wilson-Starks, President and CEO of TRANSLEADERSHIP, INC., an international consultant who is conducting the leadership development process. “It's part of the company's culture to develop leaders even though they know everyone will not be there permanently.”

Dr. Wilson-Starks who coined the phrase “Departure Guilt” says this phenomenon is a crisis response that emerges in the short-term fury of a merger and in the current climate of questioning the limits of ethical behavior. Company leaders need to calm down and remember the long-term benefits of leadership development, no matter where they end up working. The highest quality leaders look for companies that regularly invest in the leadership development of their people. “Having experience with change and transitions is becoming increasingly valuable. Everyone benefits from leadership excellence”, she further says.

“What the economy needs is a workforce that is developed and ready to work,” says Dr. Wilson-Starks. “Now is not the time to delete the cutting-edge leadership development that yields business success.”

While Dr. Wilson-Starks must keep names of clients confidential, she is happy to discuss Departure Guilt and other trends in leadership development. She can be contacted at (719) 534-0949, ext. 1 or DrKyws@aol.com. For more information on TRANSLEADERSHIP, INC., visit www.transleadership.com.

Dr. Wilson-Starks is the President and CEO of TRANSLEADERSHIP, INC. an international executive leadership development consulting company based in Colorado Springs. As a business psychologist, she holds a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Connecticut. Her company works with executive and high potential leaders on leading change, leadership transitions, succession planning, on-boarding, and other leadership development challenges and opportunities.

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