

Humility: The Most Powerful Paradox in Business

Successful organizations embrace humility as a powerful paradox. What masquerades as meekness is really strength. The perceived weakness of this virtue is the source of its power. That is the paradox. Humility makes organizations strong. That, too, is the paradox. Strength comes from synergy.

Imagine a group of talented musicians playing different songs at the same time. It is noise, not music. Organizational noise happens when team members operate independently of the larger group. This could mean team members of the same department operating apart from other team members. It could mean different departments acting as if they were part of separate organizations. In each case, there is individual effort, not organizational energy. The result is silos. Silos cost U.S. businesses 3.6% of their top line annually.

Organizational identity does not destroy individuality. It respects each member's uniqueness and values his or her contribution. A group of talented musicians playing as an orchestra creates music that none could have created on their own. Being part of this orchestra does not diminish individual talents. It honors them by asking them to join others who possess similar yet unique talents. This harmony produces art, something of real value. Organizations can achieve this too. Everyone in the organization has their own form of art to share with the group. When they work together, it is synergy.

Synergy cannot happen when teams or team members battle each other. It is impossible to be a good team member when one person focuses more on creating a position for oneself than value for the team. Teamwork demands that members subordinate their egos for the greater good of the team. Humility makes this possible. This means that humility is the necessary requisite of synergy.

Who would think that strength comes from humility? This is the paradoxical power of this simple virtue.

This article is an excerpt from Tom Reilly's new book, *The Humility Paradox* (Motivation Press, 2015). It is available from www.TomReillyTraining.com or AMAZON.