



**Solushiens**  
Quarterly Leadership Ponderable

## **The Ebenezer Effect**

**Memorializing Shared Experiences  
Can Improve Employee Retention.**



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## Overview

Employee turnover is a serious problem within most US industries ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov), 2023). Similar to a fever being a symptom of your body's natural fight against infection, I believe turnover may be a symptom of your company's lack of earned workforce loyalty. Extraordinary employee retention requires a culture of loyalty. A workplace culture of loyalty requires esprit de corps (morale and cohesion of a group) and esprit de corps can be built through human bonding, which grows through shared experiences. It is vital that shared experiences, to include adversity be commemorated and memorialized to have a lasting effect upon human bonding. Specifically, the resilience required to overcome adversity is the glue that supports human bonding. An Ebenezer is an effective way to memorialize and/or commemorate shared experiences in support of human bonding. Human bonding is an underrecognized key to workforce retention.

The *Ebenezer Effect* is the use of monuments and memorials to bolster workforce esprit de corps, loyalty, and retention by serving as a physical or symbolic marker of shared experiences, achievements, and goals. By creating a visual representation of a company's history, successes, and values, Ebenezers can help to build a sense of workforce pride and shared identity among employees.

As a result of our research, we discovered, there are companies that used Ebenezers to commemorate their survival and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some examples include:

- A small business setting up a stone or plaque to commemorate their successful efforts to adapt and continue operating

during the pandemic, despite the challenges.

- A workforce organization creating a mural or sculpture to honor the efforts of healthcare workers and essential workers who kept the workforce going during the pandemic.
- A school creating a memorial garden or an artwork to commemorate the students, staff, and families who adapted to remote learning during the pandemic.



I encourage companies to “erect Ebenezers” to commemorate victories, times of lamentation, and defeats (trauma). Doing so will improve employee retention by increasing a sense of belonging. Employees are less likely to leave a company in which they have strong bonds created by shared team experiences. According to “Symbolic Interactionism” (Khan Academy, 2023), assigning common meanings to shared experiences will strengthen social bonds. I suspect “tribal” instincts will drive improved retention if companies use Ebenezers to apply the theory.

## What is an Ebenezer?

An Ebenezer is a term that originates from the Bible and refers to a stone monument or marker that was set up to commemorate a significant event or serve as a reminder of God's help and protection. The



most famous example is mentioned in the book of Samuel and refers to a stone set up by the Israelites after their victory over the Philistines in the battle of Mizpah, which served as a reminder of God's help in their time of need. The term "Ebenezer" has since come to symbolize a symbol of hope, help, and divine support, and is sometimes used in religious and spiritual contexts to refer to a physical or figurative marker of God's faithfulness and provision.

Based on our research, Ebenezers served as a source of pride and a tangible manifestation of the people's connection to their faith, history, and culture. In times of crisis or adversity, the presence



of an Ebenezer could have helped to strengthen the people's resolve, foster a sense of unity, and provide comfort and encouragement. Overall, Ebenezers played an important role in shaping the beliefs and practices of the people who used them and in preserving the collective memory and identity of the workforce.

## Ebenezers in the Modern Workplace

While the term "Ebenezer" has its roots in the Bible, I submit that the concept of an Ebenezer can be applied in workplace contexts. In a secular sense, an Ebenezer can refer to a monument, memorial,

or other marker that commemorates a significant event or serves as a reminder of a past accomplishment, victory, or triumph. For example, a company might set up an Ebenezer in the form of a statue or plaque to commemorate a person who acted heroically or to memorialize a key event in their history. Similarly, an individual might use the concept of an Ebenezer to refer to a personal marker of hope, support, or encouragement, such as a photo, a letter, or a memento that reminds them of a time when they overcame a workplace challenge or achieved an associated goal. By serving as a symbol of hope, help, and inspiration, we believe Ebenezers can provide comfort, encouragement, and motivation to those who see them, just as they did in their original religious context.

## Ebenezer Effect on Human Bonding

By representing common goals and experiences, Ebenezers can foster a sense of unity and cooperation among employees, which can strengthen social bonds and promote positive relationships in the workplace. Since Ebenezers can serve as physical reminders of the organization's successes, they can inspire employees to work together to achieve similar results in the future. Overall, the presence of Ebenezers in a workplace can help to promote human bonding and foster a strong sense of community and belonging among employees.

We have a few ideas about how Ebenezers can be used to commemorate a wide range of workplace shared experiences to support human bonding, including:

1. Milestones: Celebration of significant achievements such as reaching a sales target, launching a new product, or completing a large project can be marked with an Ebenezer.



2. Employee Recognition: Honoring employees for their years of service, contributions, or exceptional performance, memorialized by an Ebenezer can be a powerful way to recognize and appreciate their efforts.
3. Workplace Changes: Ebenezers can be used to commemorate changes in the workplace such as relocations, expansions, or renovations.
4. Workforce Involvement: Celebration of the company's involvement in workforce events, charitable causes, or volunteer activities, marked by an Ebenezer can bring to remembrance the organization's commitment to making a positive impact in the workforce.

## The Ebenezer Effect on Workplace Esprit de Corps

In our opinion, an Ebenezer can have a positive impact on the morale and cohesion of a group (esprit de corps). By serving as a visible or representational marker of a shared history, achievement, or experience, an Ebenezer can help to foster a sense of unity, pride, and belonging among group members.

Henri Fayol (1841-1925) was French and worked at a mining company in the Auvergne region of France for his entire career. He eventually became the managing director of the business in 1811. Responsible for saving the company from bankruptcy and contributing to its growth, Fayol summarized fourteen administrative principles that he had learned through his tenure with the mining company. One of them was esprit de corps.

Of the fourteen principles espoused by Fayol, we believe four relate to the workforce retention aspects of the Ebenezer Effect theory, as outlined

herein: 1) esprit de corps; 2) stability of tenure of personnel; 3) collective interests over individual interests; and, 4) unity of direction.

When individuals feel a strong sense of belonging and connection to a group, they are more likely to be committed to its goals and values, and to work together towards a common purpose. This sense of



unity and shared identity can lead to increased trust and mutual support among group members, which in turn can lead to greater loyalty and a willingness to work together, even in

difficult circumstances. When individuals feel that they are part of a group that cares for them and supports their well-being, they are more likely to reciprocate that loyalty and commitment. In this way, a strong sense of esprit de corps can foster a culture of loyalty, teamwork, and mutual support within a group, which can contribute to its success and longevity.

We believe an example is the reputation of Patagonia, an outdoor clothing and gear company based in Ventura, California. The clothier is a commonly cited example of a company with a strong sense of esprit de corps and a focus on employee wellbeing, which has helped to improve employee retention. The company places a strong



emphasis on company culture, and encourages employees to participate in outdoor activities and workforce events together (shared experiences).

As a result of these initiatives, Patagonia is often recognized as a great place to work, and employees are proud to be a part of the company. They feel valued and supported, and are less likely to leave the company in search of a better working



environment. In fact, many employees have stayed with Patagonia for many years, and the company has a low turnover rate compared to other companies in the industry.

## Ebenezer Effect on Workplace Loyalty and Performance

Developed at least partly as a result of esprit de corps, I believe loyalty can have a significant impact on workforce retention. When employees feel a strong sense of camaraderie-driven loyalty in their organization, they are less likely to leave, and more likely to remain with the company over the long term. This can benefit the company in several ways. Firstly, it reduces the costs associated with turnover, such as the time and resources required to recruit and train new employees. Secondly, it helps to ensure a stable and experienced workforce, as employees who feel a strong sense of loyalty are more likely to stay with the company

through good times and bad. Thirdly, a loyal workforce is more likely to be productive and committed to their work, which can contribute to the company's overall success. Finally, we believe a culture of loyalty and retention can attract new employees and help the company to build a reputation as a great place to work. In this way, loyalty can have a positive impact on workforce talent attraction and retention, helping companies to realize the full potential of employees and create a stable, productive, and successful workforce.

Loyalty also has a positive impact on workforce performance. When employees feel a strong sense of loyalty to their organization, they are more likely to go above and beyond in their work, to be committed to their job, and to stay with the company over the long term. It is our opinion that this stability and commitment can lead to a more productive, effective, and efficient workforce. Positive impact on workforce performance assumes employees are less likely to be distracted by job searching or considering other options, and more likely to focus on their work and the success of the company.

At Zappos, an online retailer based in Las Vegas, Nevada, a strong focus on company culture and employee happiness has led to high levels of employee loyalty and improved employee retention. Employees are encouraged to be themselves and to bring their unique personalities to work, which helps to foster a strong sense of workforce solidarity.

“In 2008, a year in which the average turnover at call centers was 150 percent, turnover at Zappos was 39 percent (including turnover owing to promotions). Managers attribute the [company's] loyalty to a culture that cultivates the passion, purpose, and humanity of its employees.” (inc.com, 2023)



Therefore, should leaders focus on measuring and pursuing workforce retention or workforce loyalty? I believe workforce loyalty is to retention as is base percentage is to winning baseball games. (Lewis, 2003) "A [person] is loyal when, first, he has some cause to which he is loyal; when, secondly, [she] willingly and thoroughly devotes [herself] to this cause; and when, thirdly, he expresses his devotion in some sustained and practical way, by acting steadily in the service of his cause." (SophiaOmni, 2017) Executive leaders who desire to improve workforce retention should lead the creation of workforce environments that memorialize mutual cause. They should then let that cause inform workplace and company culture. People are more likely to be loyal to a cause than to a culture. While increases in loyalty will increase retention, loyalty will pay dividends beyond retention.

## The Ebenezer Effect on Resilience

Ebenezer monuments can be used as a way to remember and honor the experiences and efforts of individuals and communities during a significant event like the COVID-19 pandemic. They serve as a reminder of the resilience and strength of individuals and communities in the face of adversity.

We have a few suggestions on how an Ebenezer can be used to help workforces recover from failure and/or adversity, including:

1. Recognition of progress: Ebenezer can be used to commemorate and recognize progress made by the workforce, regardless of whether that progress is achieved through success or overcoming adversity.
2. Fostering resilience: By reminding employees of past challenges and how they were overcome, Ebenezer can serve as a symbol of resilience and perseverance,

inspiring employees to continue working through difficult times.



3. Building unity: Ebenezer can be used to build unity and a sense of shared purpose among employees, especially in times of crisis or adversity. When employees are working together towards a common goal, they are more likely to recover from setbacks and failures.
4. Celebrating small wins: Even small victories and positive developments can be celebrated and recognized through the use of Ebenezer. This can help to maintain morale and motivation, especially during difficult times.

## The Ebenezer Effect on Recruiting and Retention

An Ebenezer inspired culture of esprit de corps and loyalty can help to attract and retain top talent, as employees are more likely to be attracted to organizations that value their contributions and



support their well-being. As a matter of fact, this can result in a more skilled and talented workforce, which can contribute to higher levels of talent attraction, productivity and performance, and retention.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of Ebenezers in the workplace can benefit workforce performance by promoting motivation and human bonding, fostering loyalty, and enhancing workplace esprit de corps. By



creating a visual representation of a company's history, successes, and values, Ebenezers can help to build a strong and supportive work environment, and can contribute to greater staff retention and the overall success of the organization in several ways:

1. **Resilience and Retention:** Ebenezers serve as a physical or symbolic marker of achievement and can be used to recognize and celebrate the successes and efforts of employees. This recognition can boost employee morale and motivation, as they feel valued and appreciated for their contributions. As a result, employees are more likely to stay.

2. **Esprit de Corps:** Ebenezers can be used to foster a sense of workforce and shared identity among employees. When employees feel connected to their workplace and to one another, they are more likely to collaborate effectively and to be motivated to achieve common goals.
3. **Fostering Loyalty:** Ebenezers can serve as a visual reminder of a company's history, values, and achievements, which can foster a sense of pride and loyalty among employees. When employees feel a strong sense of connection to their workplace, they are more likely to remain committed to the company over the long term.
4. **Employee Engagement:** The use of Ebenezers can help to create a positive and supportive work environment by promoting a culture of teamwork, recognition, and collaboration. This can lead to a more productive and engaged workforce.

By serving as a symbol of hope, help, and inspiration, Ebenezers can provide comfort, encouragement, and motivation to those who see them, just as they did in their original context. In times of victory, crisis, or adversity, the presence of an Ebenezer will help to strengthen the people's resolve, foster a sense of unity, and provide comfort and encouragement. Overall, Ebenezers continue to play an important role in shaping the beliefs and practices of the people who use them and in preserving the collective memory and identity of the workforce. The resulting memorialization of shared experiences increases the human bonding so critical to workforce performance and employee retention.

“Remember, nothing said is everything, but everything said is something... Until next time...”



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