

The Essential Tool: The Golden Rule

A Machine Repairman's Guide to Resolving the Labor Crisis – Part Two

By Ellen Campbell

In the first installment of, “A Machine Repairman's Guide to Resolving the Labor Crisis,” we investigated root causes of the problem. We also learned that population control, technological advancements, and globalization contributed to the crisis *within the crisis* – those 7 million prime aged American men (between the ages of 25 and 54) currently opting-out of the work force. Evaluating our data, it seems that the problem is dehumanization. What needs to be repaired is the treatment of the human person. “It's like running a machine without lubrication.” Campbell Sales Engineer, Brett Richards explains. “Mechanically, the machine can run, but not at optimum performance as designed and not for long. Lube is like the life-blood of the machine.” In much the same way, a human person can function when dehumanized, but not very well and not for long. Dehumanization is, “a kind of degradation, indeed in a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person.”¹ It is not a state of nature, but maltreatment of humans *by humans*. Luckily, there is an age-old tool that can fix this problem.

Choosing the Right Tool for the Job

Successfully repairing a machine requires choosing the right tools for the job and knowing how to use those tools properly. The same is true for addressing the damage dehumanization does to the people we blithely call, “the American labor force.” Ironically, the best tool for the job is not technological advancement. It's an ancient philosophy.

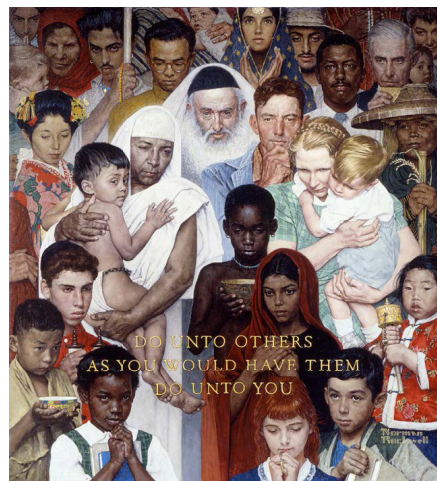
The opposite of dehumanization is empathy and respect, as perhaps best expressed by the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Some version of that belief is found in virtually all world religions. The Golden Rule is as humanizing as it gets, by calling for everyone to give others the same treatment that you would like to get yourself.²

Campbell Plant Manager, Travis Norkowski attests to the essentiality of the Golden Rule. “How we treat people is the most important issue for our shop. Applying the Golden Rule – appreciating and understanding the other person – is key to building and maintaining a solid team.” But what exactly makes the Golden Rule so effective? Listening is key, says Pete Campbell. “We need to focus on our skilled technicians. The work is fast-paced, but we need to listen to their ideas and input about their work environment and the equipment they use. And we need to consider their personal

needs in order to best support their work. When we take care of our team members first, we can provide a high-quality, dependable product to our customers.”

How to Use the Golden Rule

The Golden Rule guides a person's interior disposition. It changes your perspective from selfish to selfless. Consequently, your decisions, words and actions flow from this perspective. Like the machine repairman guided by the vision of how a press, in top condition, *should* run, the Golden Rule provides you with a goal – how you *should* treat another person. When applied to the current hiring problems, the Golden Rule guides your process of improvement, starting with you. “Using the Rule, I'm asking myself a new question,” explains Travis. “What would make me want to work here?” Ask yourself this question, and the answer you discover may radically change your hiring approach. But just as repairing a press takes a series of careful adjustments, improving your work environment is a process, not an event. It takes time and careful adjustments to your own perspective to ennoble your current team members and draw new talent to your shop. Unlike a trendy self-improvement, or quick-fix, the Golden Rule is a way of living, of doing business, of changing the world around you for the better. As Mahatma Gandhi proposed, “if we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme.”



Featured on the cover of the April 1, 1961 Saturday Evening Post, artist, Norman Rockwell, considers the dignity of the human person in his vision of the Golden Rule.

Reclaiming the Dignity of Work

Perhaps the greatest challenge we face in re-humanizing our society is understanding and promoting the value of work as integral to recognizing the dignity of others. In his book, *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, Matthew Crawford draws from the insight of philosopher Alexandre Kojève:

The man who works recognizes his own product in the World that has actually been transformed by his work: he recognizes himself in it, he sees in it his own human reality, in it he discovers and reveals to others the objective reality of his humanity.³

Surviving WWII and Communist oppression of Poland, Pope John Paul II's teaching emphasized the importance of recognizing another person's dignity through work:

Work is a good thing for man. It is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to man's dignity, that expresses this dignity and increases it.⁴

When you use the Golden Rule to express appreciation for another person's work, you are truly acknowledging the person's dignity.

Moreover, work highlighted by the virtues of integrity, perseverance, and high-quality craftsmanship, says much about a person's character. "In our line of work," explains Travis, "you're not an expert until you've put your time in. We have team members that have been with us for 10, 20, even 30 years. They exemplify the gold standard of solid work ethic, team loyalty, and craftsmanship. That is what we need to acknowledge each day, and build upon with every job."

The Golden Rule also builds camaraderie, says Tony Clifford, a master mechanic and 20-year member of the Campbell Team. Tony knows the sacrifices needed to work on the road and get a repair job done right. He knows first-hand the challenges fellow team members face when working in a client's plant. "Reaching out to team members in the field really helps. They are happy that I call and check in. It helps them build confidence – especially for a challenging or high-pressure job."

Indeed, it seems that the Golden Rule is the essential tool to repair the crisis of dehumanization. Used genuinely and consistently, the Rule can change you and the people on your team. Does the Golden Rule require personal sacrifice? In a word; yes. Travis believes the rewards are worth it. "When we understand and value each other as teammates and peers – and made to feel as such – the work performance, commitment, and communication reflects each person's sense of being genuinely valued and respected."

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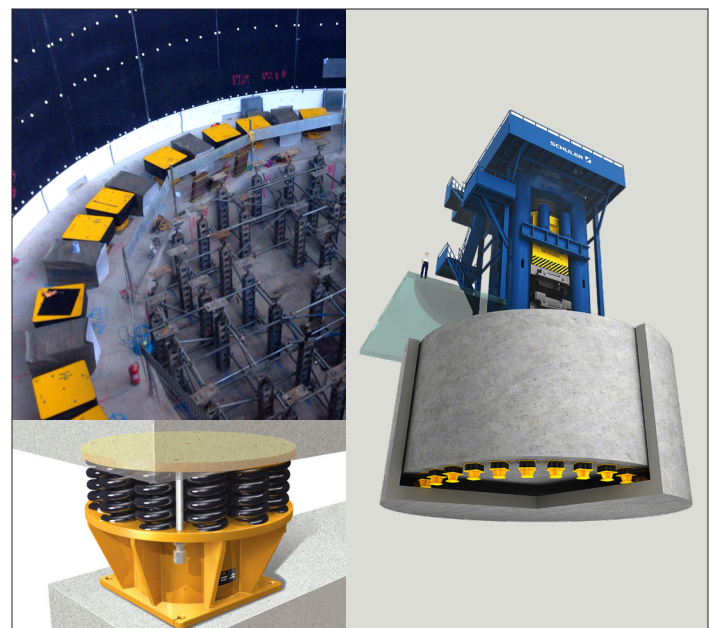
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Touring the Precision Machining Lab at Wilson Talent Center in Mason, Michigan, with Peter Campbell, Instructor Rick Castaneda, and Campbell Sales Engineer, Brett Richards.

1. *John Paul II and The Mystery of The Human Person* | *America Magazine*
2. *What Is Dehumanization, anyway?* | *Psychology Today*
3. *Crawford, Matthew B. Shop Class as Soulcraft* (p. 14). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.
4. *Pope John Paul II. Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981) | *Vatican.va*



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