

ISS Solutions White Paper

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SUPPORTING THROUGH COMPASSION: A CORE BUSINESS VALUE THROUGHOUT ISS SOLUTIONS

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What improves manager-employee relations, creates cohesion among coworkers, and solidifies key relationships with clients, all while adding value to an organization? Compassion is the secret ingredient that fosters happiness and success in the workplace. Compassion is all about acting with kindness and recognizing the humanity in team members, clients, and managers. It's about more than just being nice or friendly. "Compassion can and does take many forms," writes Robert Sutton, Professor of Management Science and Engineering at Stanford Graduate School of Business. "At its heart it is as simple as adopting the other person's point of view, understanding his anxiety, and making a sincere effort to soothe it."¹

Compassion colors all interpersonal and business aspects—everything that an organization does. Compassion is at the heart of our company culture here at ISS Solutions. Taking it on as one of our core values allows us to strengthen both our internal community and our external client collaborations. As CEO of ISS Solutions and along with the other members of the leadership team here, I have seen firsthand how making compassion stay at our core has contributed to the warm interactions that I see every day.

Putting People First

It is the leadership team's job to honor, respect, and care for our employees. At ISS Solutions, we treat people like people, not "human capital"; we recognize and respect their human dignity. After all, where would we be without our dedicated employees?

We owe a large part of our improved corporate performance to our outstanding service people. Outstanding service doesn't just happen. It requires focus and friendly persistence. The most important people at ISS Solutions are the technicians, engineers, and contact center analysts who directly serve our clients along with the internal IT, HR, finance, and administrative team members who support them in turn. They provide outstanding customer service, are friendly, respond quickly, and care about doing their job and doing it right.

Compassion is as much about doing as it is about understanding. Daniel E. Martin is associate professor of management at California State University, East Bay and visiting professor at Stanford University's CCARE (Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education), a program taking the lead in studying compassion and implementing it in the workplace. Compassion, says Daniel Martin, is "noticing suffering, empathically feeling the person's pain, and acting to ease the suffering." In this way, he says, it "goes beyond empathy to actual action."²

We can't just *tell* our employees *that* we care, but rather *show* them *how* we care. In "You Need Both Passion and Compassion to Lead", John Baldoni, a globally-recognized leadership consultant, suggests, "Put people first. Look for ways to put this concept into action. Insist on people-friendly HR policies related to sick leave and child and elder care. Consider flexible schedules. Look for ways to accommodate those who want to work part-time, such as parents with young children."³

¹ Robert Sutton, "How to be a Good Boss in a Bad Economy."

² Daniel E. Martin. "Applying Compassion in Organizations." 10 July 2012. www.huffingtonpost.com/project-compassion-stanford/compassion-work_b_1655217.html.

³ John Baldoni, "You Need Both Passion and Compassion to Lead." *Harvard Business Review* blog. 14 January 2008. http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2008/01/you_need_both_passion_and_comp.html.

ISS Solutions offers its employees a liberal paid time off and extended paid time off policy so that employees can take time off to take care of personal issues or to spend time with family on vacation. We also offer a paid time off donation program where other employees can donate their paid time off to an employee who may be out of paid time off and has a medical illness. In addition, employees can also apply for family medical leave or request a personal leave of absence to handle medical and child or eldercare situations. Our employees have access to an employee assistance program that is staffed by a third party vendor with trained counselors to help employees with either work related or personal problems. These employee-friendly policies allow employees to balance their work with their home responsibilities.

Leaders who bring out the best in their employees do so by valuing them and their work as worthwhile. Team members enjoy working for ISS Solutions because they are valued. On average, ISS Solutions' clinical engineering and IT team members have 8 or more years of experience within the company, and 16% of management and clinical engineering staff have over 20 years' experience with the company.

Compassion Saves Money

Some may scoff at the place of compassion in business. But research shows that an attitude of compassion ends up saving organizations money, as well as giving them an edge in today's competitive marketplace. "Compassion from a boss adds corporate value—in good times and in bad. What's more, it's free," says Robert Sutton, who believes leading with compassion is a key saving factor in businesses. He gives the example of temporary pay-cuts: when an executive gave a curt explanation and rushed away, the number of thefts in the company rose to nearly 10%; the same executive gave a detailed, empathetic, and long explanation to a group of employees at a different location, and theft levels were over 3 percentage points less.

Treating employees with compassion means that they stay around longer. Because experienced and expert people stick around, ISS Solutions can better serve our clients...and keep them around longer, too. We know that if we deliver outstanding service to them and treat both our clients and employees well, employee and client retention rates will be high. We are a trusted service company. Our client retention rate is over 95%. So, when we bring a new client on board, they'll be with us for the long-run.

This enables us to invest in people, training, processes, and capital required to get the job done for our clients.

During our hiring process, we look for candidates that have solid technical skills but we also look for candidates that can demonstrate a compassionate, team player get the job done mindset. Once hired, employees go through an extensive orientation and we provide them with the necessary tools and resources to exceed client expectations. One of the ways we do this is by providing on-the-job training opportunities in the areas of communication, interpersonal relationship and team building so that employees can enhance and build their non-technical skills.

An example of one our training programs that deals with compassion is the training module that we partnered with Development Dimensions International which is called "Taking the Heat." This program gives our employees the tools to deal effectively with client problems and includes a four-step process to

handling client satisfaction issues. A key component of the process stresses compassion and apologizing for problems to clients before offering solutions.

Compassion throughout the Organization

Compassion isn't just about our policies and training programs. It's about how members of the leadership team and their respective management teams treat the employees at ISS Solutions.

Our leadership team continually strives to balance a concern for our people. We do this in countless ways, from being flexible with work schedules and offering paid time off to job sharing programs and part-time and flex-time opportunities to employees who are trying to balance their job duties with their personal responsibilities. By being flexible, we are able to get the job done for our clients while taking into consideration the personal needs of our employees. By accommodating our employees when and where we can, we can relieve some of the stress they feel in regards to balancing their work life and their personal life... which makes them happier and more focused on serving our clients.

According to John Baldoni, effective leaders “demonstrate compassion by holding the organization accountable for delivering on its promises to its employees.”⁴ Employees who know their company cares for them have the motivation to care back—about both fellow team members *and* clients. That's why compassion pervades all relationships within ISS Solutions.

“Importantly for organizations, compassion seems related to productivity driving pro-social behavior and organizational citizenship behavior,” says Daniel Martin. “We see compassion in the workplace daily, whether through helping a manager finish a task after hours, giving a new employee help, or offering banked sick time.”⁵

There are many examples of compassion at ISS Solutions that occur each and every day. We see it when an employee is ill and does not have any more paid time off and the employees coworkers decide to donate their paid time off to help alleviate the stress of being out-of-work without a paycheck. It occurs when a more senior employee works with a new employee and mentors and teaches him or her on company policies, job expectations, and duties. It occurs when one employee helps out a co-worker who is swamped and helps him or her to catch up.

Our team members show compassion for our clients when they need it most. Arriving at work Monday morning, Senior Biomedical Technician Dwayne Wilcox saw an urgent call from one of our clients, a hospital for which we provide clinical engineering services. The hospital's ICU computer system was down. Dwayne rushed over to the client site, diagnosed the problem, and transferred the ICU to a different network. He didn't stop there, though. Recognizing that the hospital was small and already facing large expenses, Dwayne went above and beyond, swapping around the schedule so his off-day visit wouldn't add to the client's bill.

This isn't a once-in-a-blue moon circumstance, however. From coming in on a weekend to fix life support equipment to solving a printing problem for a call center client on Christmas, ISS Solutions' team members constantly go out of their way to help or support our clients and their customers. “Delivering

⁴ Baldoni.

⁵ Martin.

excellent service is easy,” said Dwayne. “All you have to do is meet the expectations of the client. Do a couple of the small things that they ask that are outside of their contract. It doesn’t cost us anything, it doesn’t hurt us, and it just builds a better client relationship.”

Compassion’s Purpose in the Workplace

In the service business, we simply have to provide outstanding service, and provide it quickly in a friendly way. It’s all about the people that deliver that service. At ISS Solutions, we invest energy in people through focusing on compassion. Compassion is all about going above and beyond to be supportive.

“Leading effectively is, in other words, less about mastering situations—or even mastering social skill sets,” write Daniel Goleman, Ph.D., a psychologist and journalist focusing on emotional intelligence, and Richard Boyatzis, Ph.D., professor of organizational behavior, psychology, and cognitive science at Case Western Reserve University. In their *Harvard Business Review* article, they explain that the most effective leadership style is rather “about developing a genuine interest in and talent for fostering positive feelings in the people whose cooperation and support you need.”⁶

Leadership is about cultivating relationships with employees and clients. It’s about being in-tune with others and seeing their perspectives, not just trying to control behaviors. Leaders, employees, and team leaders must all be viewed holistically, as humans who deserve care and support. At ISS Solutions, we recognize the human dignity of everyone and use compassion as a guiding light, and it has benefited both our company culture and our business.

⁶ Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis. “Social Intelligence and the Biology of Leadership.” *Harvard Business Review*. September 2008: 2.