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Lipp: To keep workforce, don't get 'lazy'



Doug Lipp knows a thing or two about workplace culture. The noted trainer and speaker literally wrote the book (Disney U) on Disney University, Disney's employee training program, and how it inspired great exceptional leadership and customer service.

Lipp visited Sioux Falls recently as keynote speaker at the annual Sioux Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau Visitor Industry Luncheon. The Sioux Falls Business Journal had questions about the claims of "lazy" Millennial workers, the importance of diversity in a workforce and workplace safety.

Talk to me about the "Lazy Millennial" characterization, which occasionally makes the rounds here, including recently in a company that allegedly lost well-trained, new workers because they didn't want to work hard, and what's needed to connect with a diverse workforce?

"You can become a victim and bitch and moan about it, or you can do something about it. ... It's really looking at your organizational culture and

saying, 'how do we embrace not only those who look and sound and act and talk like us, but those people that are from a different age group, a different ethnicity, a difference language?'

"As soon as somebody says 'those darn fill-in-the-blank' -- you could say Millennials, you can say whatever you want -- that tells me that person is too lazy to step into that universe and figure it out. They say, 'well, as long as you act like me, we'll get along fine. So you adjust to me, I'm not going to adjust to you.

"I've been dealing with this for 35-40 years and isn't any different. The ones that are going to succeed are the ones who say, 'I'm going to adjust.'

"My challenge to executives who say, 'what if I train people and they leave?' I'll say yes, and that's a real possibility. And it depends on your culture if they're going to stay or not, but what if you don't train them and they stay?"

Several companies were recently cited by federal safety authorities here for alleged workplace safety failures that resulted in a building collapse and a worker fatality. How should employers ensure safe practices in their workplace?

"I've worked with linemen in power companies who get mixed messages from their supervisors. When do you have to put on your safety gear, your helmet, hats, whatever? ... It's kind of the flavor of the week depending on the supervisor. Mixed messages.

"The reality is even when you have great training, people get complacent, so I'm not going to suggest with training alone you'll be okay. ... I get so sick and tired of executives or supervisors absolving themselves of responsibility. You've got to own that. Whether its success or failure, you bring it together."