

“Red Ant or Unhappy Agent?”

By Jon Cheplak

Congratulations! As a leader in the real estate industry, whether at the branch, region or company level, you are hereby crowned as the “Director of Human Resource.” Daunting task, isn’t it? Yes indeed, but wait, here are a few tips that will assist you in the discernment process of “Red Ant” vs. the “Unhappy Agent.”

“Red Ant,” hereinafter “Red,” is a virus just waiting to happen in your office if it hasn’t happened already. Here are your steps to identifying “Red” in the interview process so that you don’t spread the poison in your office:

1. Interview 101: Ask questions; don’t “sell” in the interview. Your objective is to learn about the past experiences of the agent, whether good or bad.
2. Recognize criticizing, blaming, and complaining by the agent in the interview. If the agent exhibits any of these traits in the interview, it’s only a matter of time before this infiltrates your office after you hire them. You may have one in your office right now, this would be “Red.” Don’t let “Red” build an anthill.
3. Your interview must include a clear message around “personal responsibility” and an office full of agents that focus their energy on “the solution” not “the problem.”
4. Follow these simple steps, recognize the signs and make the right decision. If you missed the signs in the interview (in other words you hired “Red”), that’s o.k. Sometimes the strongest message you can send in your office is the termination of the “Red Ant.”

The “Unhappy Agent” is exciting in the context of this article. This agent will provide feedback that is invaluable in supporting your vision of a positive environment. I’m not talking about a complainer;

the focus here is around real experiences taking place in your office that can be improved upon. Realize that every office has its problems, that’s normal. Here are the critical steps to identifying the “Unhappy Agent” and the action steps necessary to minimize future unhappy agents:

1. Have an ongoing feedback loop that stimulates open and honest communication from your agents. This must include feedback on what is working and what is not working. The key to a successful feedback loop is your ability to take the feedback by not defensively reacting. Then you must deliver a timely response that provides a method for accomplishing the appropriate resolution.
2. Lead from “principle,” not “personality.” This is defined by making decisions that are consistent based on the situation, not the person involved.
3. Don’t hire “Red.” Agents measure your leadership constantly. The hiring decisions you make are a big part of your agent’s measurement of you as their leader.
4. Embrace the “Unhappy Agent,” welcome feedback, hold onto your principles, and deliver a solution. If there is currently an anthill under construction in your office, the exterminator will need to step in. That would be you.

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