



## Momentum

*"I would not waste my life in friction when it could be turned into momentum."*

**- Frances Willard**

**By Lisa Edwards**

Momentum starts so quietly and yet builds so forcefully.

For example, early in my career, I was working in an organization where ever so slightly and ever so quietly I started to notice the building of... Negative Vibes.

It started innocently, like the quiet snowfall along a steep mountain slope.

One person vented to another person about her boss-- something she just had to get off her chest and she needed someone to listen. The next day, another person commented to a second person about his boss. And on and on it went, one quiet conversation behind closed doors after another, slowly building a compact deluge of negativity and blame

Soon I noticed that I became swept up in the momentum, and I quickly became frustrated. In fact, I had become a boss basher. Yes, me! It wasn't that I spoke out publicly. No one ever heard a word that I thought, but my thoughts were definitely not kind.

Like the crashing of an avalanche, one single thought of my frustration had turned into anger, meanness and judgment towards my boss. I thought he was incompetent. I thought I could do his job better than he could. And, oh-my-gosh, I secretly wished that he would lose his job so that I could prove to everyone that I could do it better!

I was ashamed that I had these thoughts.

But when I dug a little deeper, I realized that the real reason that I was resentful towards my boss was that I wasn't getting what I wanted out of my job. The organization was happy with me. I was doing what they wanted me to do, but I wasn't doing what I wanted to be doing in my job.

I was going home mad every night, and I was letting my job ruin my evenings! I had even started to dread going to work everyday. I realized I had to do something different.

So, I decided that I would notice *one thing* a day that I could genuinely feel good about towards my job.

I noticed this just for myself, and to get started, I would send myself an e-mail about what I noticed that I felt good about. It started out simply. "I appreciate my paycheck" was nearly all I could focus on in the beginning. At moments when I felt irritated, I could look at my e-mail and be reminded of the one thing that made me feel good: money!

Every day I would find something new about my job that I felt good about. I liked my desk. I liked the building where I worked. I liked my computer. I liked the coffee. I loved the paid holidays, and I liked my friend in a different department.

Soon, my thoughts turned to things such as I liked that my boss really listened to me today. I liked that my boss made me laugh. I liked that my boss didn't get upset when I made a big mistake and he covered for me.

Slowly and ever so quietly, the momentum had shifted into a different direction.

By the end of a month I didn't have to think about *one thing* that I genuinely liked about my boss because I genuinely appreciated all of who he was. My perception of him had completely transformed. I could see that he was competent. I could see that he was smart and a good decision maker. I could easily see that I could never do his job as well as he did it.

And the unexpected part?

He helped me put together a plan so that I could start doing the work that I had *really* wanted to be doing in my job.

Today, I work with companies that have high turnover. In almost every case, companies with high turnover have low morale and negative energy. And in nearly every case, there is one individual in the organization who seems to be the target of everyone's negativity and is generally the person I have to win over if we are ever going to make any progress in reducing turnover.

While the facts and data of the high cost of turnover are essential in getting attention and support for change, it's the subtle shifts in momentum that can help to move things forward in the right direction.

It's easy to think that organizational change begins with someone else changing. But the reality is that positive change can begin with one person thinking one thing that grows and builds and creates positive momentum for everyone.

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