

Charlie: Sense of Responsibility

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES on HUMAN QUALITIES

When I was hired by an agency that takes care of people with mental retardation, we had an orientation meeting. The leader of the meeting asked us to list the qualities of such people. I had never worked with them before, and from what I remembered from college, things such as poor memory, lack of attention, impatience, inability to focus or concentrate on a task, and other such qualities began to emerge in my mind.

However, those who had work experience named other qualities, such as "friendliness", "cordiality", "compassion" and "kindness", I was a little surprised. I also remember that the person who was leading this meeting, a quality assurance specialist, was very emotional in explaining to us how wonderful these people are and how well we should treat them. It happened that after that, I met a lot with this man at work and I was surprised how much his words were at odds with his deeds. This is one of the stories

CHARLIE and QUALITY ASSURANCE SPECIALIST

Once we had a regular training to improve the quality of work. One of our clients, Charlie, was with us. He sat in the corner and waited for the bus to take him home. Charlie didn't speak. He could actually talk, but like many of them, he didn't like talking.

He looked very funny: chubby, big head, huge face with long curly hair. He looked like a good-natured puppy. In addition, due to Down's syndrome, his tongue was stuck out, which made the resemblance complete. He used to sit quietly in the corner of the room, staring into space until he fell asleep. The male employees liked to shake him up. They used to play with him, shake him and make a fuss around him. He used to respond with mild growls and grunts to what they disturbed him. When he was tickled, he laughed amusingly in a bass voice. In a word, Charlie was hilarious entertainment for the staff

But, in fact, he could do many different things: assemble puzzles and simple structures, and he could certainly do many other tasks. And he could answer questions. I remember one of our employees who loved her job and the clients called me once to show Charlie's abilities. "Look!" - she said with pride in her voice and began to ask him various questions. And he gave clear answers to them. For me, it really felt like a miracle. I thought that all he could do was sleep in a corner and make inarticulate sounds.

CHARLIE'S SECRET ACTIVITY

In fact, Charlie had his own hobby or activity that filled his life on the program. He liked to put small items in the pockets of other people's outerwear. He had such fun. Prank. When I happened to work with him, I had to observe his actions up close. He certainly had a plan in mind.

He opened a closet with jackets and put a trifle like a pencil or an eraser in someone's pocket, but then for some reason he was not satisfied with the result. He took out a pencil and looked for another jacket. He worked hard and seriously. He was considering his actions. It was impossible to distract him. He could become aggressive. Nothing could distract him from the important business with which he was busy. All words like: "Let's go, everyone is waiting! Have to go!" - didn't help. He simply brushed you off like an annoying fly and continued his work. When he finally implemented his plan or idea, he usually sighed happily and contentedly, and was ready to follow you around and do whatever you asked him to do.

When I learned about this secret activity of Charlie, I was no longer sorry for the time when he sat motionless in the corner, staring into space. He must have been busy thinking up new scenarios and creating ways to implement them.

THEORY vs PRACTICE

...So, we were having a training session on how we should provide better care for our clients or, as they were officially called, "consumers" of our services. Charlie was dozing in a corner. At this time, a mute girl, who was also waiting for the bus, went straight up to the training speaker - our quality assurance specialist - and began to show him something, making indistinct sounds and pointing to her watch. This girl was known for her

constant concern for other people. In the house where she lived with her comrades, she took care of everyone who needed help, doing the hardest work to help another person.

The quality assurance officer tried to kick her out of the room. He tried to explain to her that she couldn't stay here, that we were busy and she should leave. She did not listen to him, becoming more and more emotionally aroused and resisting more strongly. Then the quality assurance officer lost patience and began to force her out of the room. She resisted. We, the employees, silently watched this scene.

Suddenly, Charlie stood up from his seat and made a furious indignant speech in his slurred language, then he made an expressive gesture, waved his hand hopelessly at the quality assurance specialist, and resolutely left the room ... Then we realized it was time for the customers to go home ... and employees must do their job - seat customers on buses.

We were all fired one by one from this program. This agency had an interesting habit - if something went wrong somewhere, they fired all the employees from there and recruited new ones. When it was my turn to be fired without any clear explanation, I went to the quality assurance specialist for clarification. He brushed me off the same way he brushed off the customers he was responsible for .

