Creating a Culture of Forgiveness in the Workplace
A Sampling of Articles/Annotated Bibliography
Compiled by Lyndon Harris

Fehr, Brian and Michele J. Gelfand. "The Forgiving Organization: A Multilevel Model of Forgiveness at Work" published in *Academy of Management Review* 2012, Vol. 37, No. 4, 664–688. http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/amr.2010.0497

Brian Fehr and Michele Gelfand have written a substantive 23 page journal article examining the core cultural values in organizations that allow forgiveness climates to emerge, including a consideration of restorative justice, compassion and temperance as attributes supporting a culture of forgiveness in the workplace. This article is a seminal piece steeped in extensive references at the end (102 in all!).

Kjerulf, Alexander, (2007: May 2) "Create a Culture of Forgiveness in the Workplace" http://positivesharing.com/2007/05/create-a-culture-of-forgiveness-in-the-workplace/)

Kjerulf writes about three ideas related to forgiveness: 1. Teach leaders to forgive mistakes, 2. Teach leaders to apologize, 3. Make people happy at work

Kjerulf, Alexander, (2007: May 1) "To Err is Human – to Forgive is Divine. And Profitable!" http://positivesharing.com/2007/05/workplace-forgiveness/

Kjerulf interviews forgiveness in the workplace researcher Sarah Warner and discusses her surprising results: not only is forgiveness in the workplace beneficial for job satisfaction, but productivity increased at surprising levels!

Madsen, Susan R., et al. "Forgiveness as a Workplace Intervention: The Literature and a Proposed Framework" (2009) Institute of Behavioral and Applied Management http://www.ibam.com/pubs/jbam/articles/vol10/No2/JBAM_10_2_6.pdf

Madsen and her colleagues have provided an insightful and thorough review of the literature regarding forgiveness in the workplace and have offered an integrated three-part framework for exploring the importance of forgiveness in the workplace: 1. the individual (psychological) level which involves letting go of an offense even if it is justified and the hurt is sustained; 2. The interpersonal or "dyadic" (communication) level, which involves letting the offending party know that the offense has been removed; and, 3. The organizational/cultural (social) level which means that the relationship and associations are in balance and functioning effectively.

Seppälä, Emma, (2015: December 7) "The Best Kept Secrets of the Happiest Workplaces" https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/feeling-it/201512/the-best-kept-secrets-the-happiest-workplaces

Seppälä, citing research on happiness as the key to work place success, takes up the topic of forgiveness.

First, the costs of stressful work places: 1. Health care expenses at high pressure companies is 50% higher than other companies; 2. Employees' disengaging from work comes at a high cost: disengaged workers have 37% higher absenteeism, 49% more accidents, 60% more errors and defects; 3. Lack of loyalty comes at a high cost: The Center for American Progress estimates that replacing a single employee costs approx. 20% of employee's salary

Second, there are six essential characteristics of a healthy work place: 1. Caring for colleagues as friends; 2. Providing support including kindness and compassion when needed; 3. Avoiding blame and forgiving mistakes; 4. Inspiring one another; 4. Emphasizing the meaningfulness of the work; 5. Treating one another with respect, gratitude, integrity, and trust.

Third, she offers insights as to how as a boss or a colleague, one can foster these principles: 1. Foster social connections: toxic stress-filled workplaces affect social relationship *and life expectancy*; 2. Show empathy: showing empathy for employees creates resilience; 3. Go out of your way to help: employees of self-sacrificing leaders are more productive and they trust their leaders more; and 4. Encourage people to talk to you – especially about their problems: trusting that a leader has you best interests at heart improves employee performance.

Stone, Michael. "Forgiveness in the Workplace" *Industrial and Commercial Training* Volume 34 . Number 7 . 2002 . pp. 278-286. http://personal.tcu.edu/pwitt/character/Forgiveness/forgiveness%20in%20the%20workplace.pdf

Michael Stone states in the abstract: "True forgiveness supports the retention of valued employees, allows for greater creativity and innovation, leads to increased profitability, and generates greater flexibility in adapting to changing market conditions." Stone considers the cost of non-forgiveness, and offers a thorough vision for developing a culture of forgiveness in the workplace.

Williams, David K. (2015: January 5) "Forgiveness: The Least Understood Leadership Trait in the Workplace" http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidkwilliams/2015/01/05/forgiveness-the-least-understood-leadership-trait-in-the-workplace-2/#6ced80f86374 Williams observes that forgiveness builds great companies because everyone is respected and equally valuable. Citing Lincoln, he declares that we best rid ourselves of our enemies by making them our friends.