

Managing People for Maximum Results

Interacting with employees and their individual needs often seems as if it is interfering with our efforts to manage our companies, meet our objectives and interact with external players like customers and distributors. Nonetheless, we expect them to respond positively to demands, work as a team, and perform up to high expectations. So the question is, what can we do to meet the needs of our employees, making them feel appreciated and compensated, while not detracting from our core mission of moving our business forward?

While your ability to solve employee problems may, most of the time, be beyond your reach, you do have influence over many factors that affect them. The task you need to assume is that of making that influence positive and constructive, helpful and supportive. As a manager you have an interest in maintaining high morale and work ethic, as well as, Tudog would propose, a responsibility to do so.

Looking at Your Own Actions

The first step to positive management of your employees is taking an honest look at how you interact with them. An integral part of your management style is how you motivate, encourage, discipline and relate to those working for you. The following traits generally serve to motivate employees best:

- Grant Positive Attention – discipline and correction should not be the only time you interact with your employees. You need to make a special effort to provide positive attention to each person, finding the actions and traits that deserve reinforcement and praise.
- Correct Gently – Certainly there will be moments when you need to correct errors made by employees. Errors of ignorance or human frailty should be excused easier than errors born of malice or poor effort. Correcting someone gently not only eliminates ill feelings and fear, but also encourages people to want to try harder and avoid mistakes.
- Interact Courteously – there is never a reason to act devoid of manners. Even when you are at your angriest, remember that respect brings respects and you need to be courteous and mindful of manners at all time.
- Respond Thoughtfully – as the leader, you need to consider your reactions and responses carefully before you display your feelings or thoughts. By doing so, you set the tone and the character of dialogue for all your employees. You also demonstrate that consideration of actions is a respected and appreciated trait.
- Live Your Own Standards – you may believe that being the boss gives you the right to demand of others behaviors, responsibilities, characteristics, and traits that you yourself are unwilling to embrace, display or abide to, but you'd be wrong. Your employees will spot any discrepancies between your demands and your behavior and not only despise you as a hypocrite, but also fail to behave as you request.

Motivating Others

Interestingly, some factors that we might consider to be critical to motivating others are in fact deemed of no importance by studies and the experts. For example, level of pay

and company policies are viewed as non-essential factors (called “hygiene factors” in the literature), because once fair levels of these elements are reached they no longer serve to motivate employees (although certainly unfair levels can serve to de-motivate).

Motivators, then, are the day-to-day interactions and conditions that serve to create a sense of well being, satisfaction and accomplishment. They are: recognition, the assignments, achievement, advancement, and responsibility. Let’s take a brief look at each.

Recognition

Recognition makes people feel appreciated. By recognizing someone’s work, you are letting them know that you notice them and their efforts. This serves to encourage them to continue working hard, because they see you care. Moreover, by providing recognition you set yourself up for practical work reviews, as your positive comments and constructive criticisms are viewed as coming from someone who is aware and familiar with the employee and his or her work.

The Assignments

When placing assignments you should seek to provide work that is both interesting and challenging. Sure there are some tasks that need to be done that are boring and routine, but keeping your staff motivated requires that you either limit these sort of tasks, or rotate their assignment so that each employee has the chance to engage in more stimulating work. Interesting work keeps our brains engaged, and challenging work gives us a special sense of achievement once it is completed.

Achievement

In your role as manager you most likely are the individual that selects the goals for your team, a task that is not as simple as it seems. If you select a goal that is too simple to achieve (thinking you’ll provide them with some easy successes), you may not set the bar high enough, challenge them enough, or provide them with a sense of accomplishment. Conversely, if you set the bar too high, you may intimidate them, set them up for failure, and serve to discourage them. The answer is to provide not one target, but a series of targets that are presented and viewed as stages toward the completion of a larger, grander task. Make sure you celebrate the completion of each stage, allowing your employees to sense the progress, prepare for the next set of challenges, and be proud of the achievement.

Advancement

There are some elements of employee advancement that, while you may be able to influence, you do not control, such as promotion, salary increases, job security and similar issues. Still, there are issues that you do control, such as increasing responsibility, allowing employees to expand their skills, and providing them with new and broader experiences. Your employees will be looking to you to grant them the opportunities within your control so that they have a better chance at obtaining those outside your mandate. Granting them these chances will earn you their respect, gratitude, and loyalty.

Responsibility

Studies have shown that of all the positive motivators, responsibility leaves the greatest impression because being granted more responsibility is seen as a type of advancement, which gives the individual a sense of achievement. Also, the new responsibility may also mean an improved assignment. Often as a manager it is hard to delegate responsibility because you are still held accountable for any failures that may result. But distributing responsibility appropriately and to the right individuals serves as a great motivator.

When thinking about motivating others it is important to think long term and develop a sustainable approach that serves to maintain employee enthusiasm and encourage loyalty. By providing the environment, leadership and motivating elements you will be able to manage your staff for maximum results.

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