

## The People Factor

The increase in competition for jobs and the rise in tensions in the workplace has led many business leaders to begin pondering how the changes in human dynamics are affecting the performance of companies, and whether there is anything that can be done to increase motivation and improve employee attitudes. Certainly management can ease some of the tension by being more consistent in their demands and how they affect workers. For example, the habit of telling employees to complete tasks on accelerated timetables while cutting back on staff inevitably leads to less people doing more work within a shorter period of time. This leads to resentment, burnout, and poor performance. Consistent with this are the elements of human interaction and the way various personalities interact within the corporate environment. This article explores some personality types and how the challenges of joining them together can be overcome.

In learning how to overcome what Tudog refers to as “contemptuous personalities”, we need to review what the dominant traits of these personalities are and how they affect the workplace. Tudog has seven personality types it recognizes as requiring management attention to keep the workforce stable and motivated. They are:

1. The Pessimist – this person is a hard worker and a good person. He/she, however, does not believe in the company and its mission and thinks the company’s chances of success are nil. This individual is not typically a long term employee, as their lack of faith usually leads them to seek employment elsewhere. The challenge for management is that they do not diminish the faith of others around them, leading to the loss of other good employees.

2. The Know-It-All – this person is usually highly intelligent, but perhaps not as smart as he/she thinks. The difficulty with this person is that they may have a hard time both accepting authority and following the rules. If they assume an informal leadership role they could undermine the genuine leadership of the company. The challenge for management is to monitor these individuals for compliance

3. The Angry Person – this individual is mad at the world for whatever reason. Whether perceived or real, this person feels cheated and is angry. The anger can, at times, be directed at the company for which he/she works, leading to a decline in motivation for those surrounding this person. The challenge here is to make certain that this person does not have the opportunity to either poison the atmosphere or create confrontations.

4. The Mean Person – this person differs from the angry person in both reason and approach. A person who is mean may in fact also be angry, but the way they manifest the anger is by taking it out on others. The angry person might be mad at the world, not necessarily at particular people. The mean person may find a few fellow employees and make it their mission to make their lives miserable. The psychological reasons for this behavior are less important to the context of this article. The management challenge for management is to monitor this individual and make certain that he/she does not have the opportunity to bully people, especially to the point where it influences their ability to perform.

5. The Complainer – this individual is simply tough to satisfy. For him/her nothing is ever done right and nothing is ever fair. The challenge for management is to make certain this person does not have the capacity to wear down others or drag down morale.

6. The Indecisive Person – people who are incapable of making decisions are not a detriment to a company, provided of course that they are not placed in positions where decision making is a core function. The indecisive person may in fact function well in a role that requires adherence to rules and where the performance parameters are well defined. The management challenge with someone indecisive is make sure that he/she is placed properly and not given the opportunity to serve as a bottleneck because decisions aren't being made.

7. The Do-Little – there are many employees that simply don't do very much. They find creative and sometimes less creative ways to avoid getting work done. Often they are clever enough to cover their inefficiencies or are able to pass their tasks on to others. The do-littles are problematic because ultimately the people picking up the slack become resentful – not only of the person but also of the company for allowing the person to continue even though he/she is not performing. The management challenge is to make certain that scheduled performance evaluations are conducted and that each employee is carrying his/her own weight.

Now that we understand the seven types of personalities that can cause disruption in the workplace, let's review five tactics that can be used to neutralize the possible negative effects they may have. They are:

1. Balance – never allow a situation whereby any one personality type (especially a negative personality type) is dominant in any one department or division of your company. If you balance out the qualities among your staff you will find that the poorer traits are discounted and the positive skills prevail.

2. Intent – make certain that you willfully seek to change the behavior that is unacceptable to you. If you demonstrate your intent you will succeed in altering behavior that counters the atmosphere and mood you wish to create in the workplace. This will allow you to preserve the level of employee motivation.

3. Acknowledge – not everything a complainer complains about is automatically incorrect and not everything someone angry gets angry about is inconsequential. You need to make sure that you acknowledge the legitimacy of contentions even when the source of the issue is someone known to engage in negative behavior. By doing this you will demonstrate your concern and increase your validity when you elect to discount the complainer's complaints and the angry person's rants.

4. Share – there is never enough information you can provide to your employees. Often they are left unaware of the many of the activities in the office and this leads to speculation and misunderstandings. Certainly management is entitled to maintain discretion on issues it feels it does not wish to share, but often the habit of secrecy enters into areas that are available to be shared and yet somehow aren't. By sharing you are eliminating gossip and removing ammunition from those seeking to stir conflict within the organization.

5. Communicate – one way to move your employees from conflict to cooperation is to communicate with them on a regular basis, transmitting not only the information you want them to have, but also giving them the opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions, and comment on issues of concern to them. It is important to remember that a key aspect of communication is listening, allowing people to see that they are being heard and understood. By communicating you are alleviating tensions in the work environment by giving people the opportunity to express themselves, leaving them less of a need to stir problems or highlight issues that cause them displeasure.

Human resources are one of the most critical assets of any company. Human beings are, however, also extremely complex. Sometimes the maximization of human potential is dependent on the minimization of some of the less positive aspects of human behavior.