

When Times Are Tough...

by Carolyn Merriman

In today's work environment, we're doing more with less AND dealing with highly complex issues and employees who seek a rewarding work environment, balanced with quality of life. That's why recognizing and rewarding the kind of performance you want is a management concept to embrace. As a manager and leader, you can create a motivational environment as part of your everyday efforts.

"No employee seeks to be mediocre; all seek to be magnificent. And in the process, any work environment can be productive, motivating and fulfilling."

**Ken Blanchard, co-author
of *The One Minute***

First, personally serve as a role model for your team. Demonstrate the behaviors and results desired. Second, define and articulate behaviors and results you desire. Provide them with training and education about performance measures. Third, build recognition and reward into your department. Use performance standards, variable compensation or team bonus programs, non-cash incentives — and, of course, personal thanks and recognition for a job well done.

Beyond the no- or low-cost ways to recognize and motivate employees, consider other more formal management tactics for employee motivation.

Professional Development and Training. Training, continuing education and a need for knowledge is ongoing. Many organizations invest in this as a one-time event, but might want to consider assessing their staff's knowledge in four areas: product, packaging/process, skills and interpersonal relationships.

Consider group and individual assessments in each of these four areas. Hold quarterly meetings of operations and sales staff. Include agenda topics such as ways to better benefit the customer, enhancement of their product, organizational or specific skill area. Look for ways to create value, have fun and tie training to real-life case studies to problem-solve as a team (interdisciplinary and cross training of team). Assess training needs: What can be done with internal resources versus external, when is it right to use a training consultant? Cross-train your staff, update regularly and support/reinforce training.

Performance Management. Clearly define performance objectives and the measurements to evaluate them. Utilize tracking and measurement tools. If you are able to provide compensation tied to results, use this for individuals as well as teams. Make sure you help your staff know where to prioritize and focus their time and energy for the organization's ultimate success. Help set objectives, provide coaching and development through training and in-house learning opportunities and outside continuing education, evaluate efforts and provide final recognition

and reward for achievements.

Rewards. All rewards (financial or not) need to reinforce desired behaviors and results. The staff must value the rewards and if financial, the pay must be aligned to the organizational strategic and tactical initiatives and culture. Additionally, with financial rewards, there needs to be internal alignment of pay systems, clear communication about when additional performance pay is made available and for what results. This all must work alongside a consistent well-defined compensation objective and philosophy.

Create Energy and Pride. Promote your organization, internally and externally — make sure staff knows about your successes.

- Give sales/operational staff messages to share — what makes you great to do business with, different and better than the competition — what's your sizzle?
- Enable and expect your team to model your brand.
- Don't assume or take staff for granted — communicate, listen, involve, coach and challenge, develop them — and hold them accountable for their clearly defined responsibilities.

Remember, our business is about our employees, partners and customers. We succeed when we motivate and cultivate a culture of caring, empowered and dedicated people who make customers feel better for having done business with us.



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