

ONLY AN INTEGRATED APPROACH WILL INCREASE EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

By Greg Giesen

We've come to know a lot about employee motivation. We know that the ultimate responsibility for motivating employees lies within the individual employee. We know that both the *meaningfulness* of the work and the *work environment* itself can have a sizable impact on employee motivation. We know that intrinsic rewards and motivators tend to have a much longer lifespan for employees than extrinsic rewards and motivators. And, we know that what motivates one employee will not necessarily motivate another.

But sometimes a little knowledge can be dangerous.

What do I mean? I mean that knowing what motivates employees is only half the battle. The real test is our ability to create a culture that fosters high morale and motivation. Too often we fall into the trap of incorporating the latest and greatest motivational programs in hopes of creating improved performance. These short-term remedies can often serve as band-aids to problems that require much greater attention. As a result, improvements in morale and motivation tend to occur sporadically within an organization instead of in a collective, synergistic way.

The solution is an integrated approach.

What's needed is an organizational-wide, integrated approach to creating a culture of high morale and motivation. What's needed is a top-down management philosophy and corresponding strategies that integrates management practices with efforts to enhance employee motivation. What's needed is greater consistency throughout the organization in communicating to employees about performance standards, expectations, feedback and professional growth opportunities, to name a few.

Why is integration so important?

Without an integrated approach to creating a motivated workforce, inconsistencies will surface throughout the organization and quickly sabotage any positive momentum that occurs. For example, a high performing supervisor will quickly lose her motivation if she keeps getting her decisions overturned by her respective manager. A great benefits program will do little to motivate employees if the tension in the office is so thick that you could cut it with a knife. An awards luncheon will send mixed messages if employees are expected to pay for their own lunches. A supervisor who preaches value-added customer service and then yells at his employees will quickly lose respect as well as the value-added customer service that he so desires. In each of these examples, there are contradictory messages that ultimately will serve as de-motivators and most likely lead to employee apathy.

In an integrated organization, management practices are in much greater alignment with efforts to improve morale and motivation. Managers and employees alike have clarity on their roles and responsibilities and communication from the top-down is both frequent and fluent. Motivational programs support efforts towards greater morale and productivity but are not seen as an end in itself. And most importantly, all employees, from the CEO down to the frontline worker, understand their role in making the organization successful.

HOW INTEGRATED IS YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Below are 20 assessment questions for you and your organization to address as honestly as possible. Each question either directly or indirectly impacts employee morale and motivation. The more questions that you can respond with a definitive “YES,” the more integration there is in your organization.

1. Do you have an organizational-wide philosophy and corresponding strategies that addresses employee motivation?
2. Have you ever conducted a comprehensive assessment of current organizational practices, programs and management techniques that impact employee motivation to determine their effectiveness?
3. Do you specifically attempt to hire employees who have a proven record of self-motivation?
4. Do your performance reviews measure the individual characteristics needed to sustain a work environment of high morale and motivation?
5. Is ongoing feedback available on all levels and in all directions throughout the organization?
6. Is there consistency in how managers manage within the organization?
7. Are employee and departmental performance expectations clearly defined and mutually shared to enhance accountability?
8. Do employees have access to the resources they need (both within and outside the organization), to adequately meet the demands of their jobs?
9. Are disciplinary issues handled swiftly and consistently?
10. Do employees have input into their work processes?

11. Does the CEO practice the behaviors that he/she expects to see amongst the workforce?
12. Are employees throughout the organization expected to complete a professional development plan each year? If so, are these shared within the departments?
13. Can employees explain the organization's vision and mission and relate it to what they do on a daily basis?
14. Is mutual respect displayed between employees? How about between departments?
15. Are technical and soft skills training made available to employees on an ongoing basis?
16. Are personal and professional development opportunities made available to employees within the organization? If opportunities are limited, can an employee pursue an opportunity outside the organization and know that he/she has the support to do so?
17. Are communication processes effective within the organization, especially from the top-down?
18. Are employees rewarded and acknowledged for performing above-and-beyond what is expected of them?
19. Are the benefits within the organization representative of what's important to the employees?
20. Would employees say that your organization was a fun place to work?

Consider the following scale in rating your organization:

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|------------------------|-----------|
| 16 – 20 YES responses: | Very Good |
| 11 – 15 YES responses: | Good |
| 6 – 10 YES responses: | Poor |
| 1 – 5 YES responses: | Yikes! |

Each of the questions above represents areas that need to be integrated together in order for your organization to have a consistent message around employee morale and motivation.



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