



Satisfied Employees Hike Performance & Profitability

ANYONE CAN TELL YOU WHAT IT MEANS TO BE PRODUCTIVE, BUT FINDING WAYS TO ENCOURAGE, IMPROVE, AND REWARD PRODUCTIVITY IS SOMETIMES A MYSTERY TO THOSE WHO MANAGE PEOPLE.

This is part one of a two-part article on improving productivity, performance, and profitability. It is based on a program presented more than 10 years ago by management consultant A. J. Stinnett, with a few minor updates.

Top performance occurs only when your managers concentrate on five key areas: Operations, people, information technology, financial management, and overall management. That concentration leads to an understanding that allows an organization to grow and be profitable.

So it's the responsibility of the managers. What surprises many, though, is this: Managers can't do it alone. Success requires teamwork and an effective way to enhance teamwork involves creating an action team that includes members from each part of the company under the direction of a well experienced manager who leads the team.

The team will examine each process, develop recommendations for improvement, and document the changes. The team leader should report to the CEO or at least to a senior executive who reports to the CEO.

The Team's Responsibility

THE ACTION TEAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEWING ALL EXISTING PROCESSES CAREFULLY AND THOROUGHLY TO FIND WAYS TO MAKE EACH PROCESS BETTER, TO SPEED THE PROCESS, TO IMPROVE THE RESULTS, OR TO REDUCE THE COST.

The team may find that some processes are no longer needed or are counterproductive.

"Managers can't do it alone."



It's not uncommon for a comprehensive review to reveal that some processes are obsolete, are being conducted in the wrong order or by the wrong people, or should be combined with other functions. To succeed, the team must identify the desired result of each process and set quality standards for each result.

The Team's Authority

THE TEAM MUST HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES. FAILING THIS, NOTHING WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED. IDEALLY, ONLY THE CEO CAN REJECT A CHANGE THE ACTION TEAM RECOMMENDS.

In fact, the CEO must be the primary cheerleader for the action team and must support it throughout the process and be ready to protect it from sabotage.

As changes are made, the team is responsible for evaluating whether the results are acceptable and then either documenting successful processes and tracking their ongoing performance or modifying the process. The manager who leads the team is responsible for determining the cause of any failure and taking the appropriate corrective action.

TEAMWORK

Managing Change

THIS PROCESS TURNS TYPICAL CORPORATE PROCEDURES UPSIDE DOWN.

When people know they are expected to manage their own performance and produce acceptable results, remarkable things start to happen. When they know that they are being given a certain measure of autonomy in determining how to do their jobs, satisfaction increases.

The process of self management depends on making sure that each person understands and accepts two rules of performance:

- First, all employees are expected to do the job right every time.
- Second, every employee is expected to do as much work as needs to be done.

To pave the way for employees to follow those rules, managers must eliminate obstacles

and prove to employees that they are ready and willing to help.

Record and Reward

ALTHOUGH MANY EMPLOYEES WILL RESPOND TO THIS PROGRAM, IT'S STILL MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO TRACK INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EACH WEEK.

Record only superior or substandard work so that you will have the information needed to make informed decisions about which employees should be trusted, which should be promoted, and which need help.

Share the performance record with employees quarterly and ask for their comments. A quarterly review need take no more than a few minutes and need not create angst for either the manager or the employee. Managers should end these meetings by

asking sincerely, if the employee needs any help to continue the superior work or the good work, or to improve any substandard work.

By tracking results each week and summarizing each quarter, most of your work will already be done when it's time for the annual performance review. The review will be based on relevant facts instead of on faulty memory, emotion, or personality.

Next Month

IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE, WE'LL CONTINUE THIS ARTICLE WITH THREE MORE TOPICS:

Customers need to be considered when making changes, finances must also be reviewed during the process, we'll also consider the need to manage the managers. Ω

Microsoft's Public Relations Challenges

MICROSOFT ISN'T THE ONLY COMPANY THAT DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT PUBLIC RELATIONS SHOULD BE, BUT IT'S A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE PROBLEM.

Recently, as a *TechByter Worldwide* journalist, I had two questions for Microsoft. A Seattle public relations agency, in theory, can seek out information from inside the black box that is Microsoft and provide useful responses. In practice, it doesn't work that way.

Question: My conjecture is that a hardware detection routine [in an update process] was faulty and threw bogus error messages. It seems that the detection routine has been patched and no longer detects compatible monitors as being incompatible. Can you or someone at Microsoft address that issue on the record?

Response: *Windows 10 continues to have the highest customer satisfaction of any version of Windows. If a customer has any issues during their upgrade to Windows 10 or upon updating to the Windows 10 Anniversary Update, we offer free customer support at www.microsoft.com/support.*

Question: What statistics do you have on successful upgrades to the latest version of Windows? Based on my experience and what I've seen discussed on the internet, it would appear that most updates are succeeding. Are you able to release any statistical information?

Response: *We are really pleased with the global reception to Windows 10 and Microsoft devices and excited to see over 350 million monthly active devices running Windows 10. In fact, Windows 10 continues to be on the fastest growth trajectory of any version of Windows – ever.*

Businesses and politicians seem to live in fear that something they say might actually mean something. There is no useful information in either of the responses (not answers) from Microsoft's public relations agency. Waggener Edstrom can do only what Microsoft allows it to do and Microsoft has been the agency's largest client since the early 1980s.

What's needed is a decision by Microsoft's public relations vice president or by Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella to be more transparent.

Microsoft should examine its public relations policies, consider what it can do to be more transparent, and communicate those new policies to Waggener Edstrom. I can't imagine the frustration of being a Waggener Edstrom employee who is forced to respond to legitimate questions with little more than drivel.

How do your company's PR efforts compare to the ideal? Ω