

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

The Secret Pill

Every employer wants to know how to motivate her or his employees.

They ask the question in a very peculiar way, suggesting that I sell them *the secret pill* that magically “**will fix everything**”. Alas, no such pill exists (at least, not yet!). There is, however, a very simple and practical three-step approach for turbo-charging your workforce. And the good news is that it’s all within your control!

Mutual Respect

Employees need and deserve *respect*.

Mutual respect is the fundamental premise for all positive human interactions. Yet in far too many environments, there exists a pervasive *disrespect* for the workforce. A culture characterized by weakened *mutual respect* will breed unhappiness, contempt, lethargy, and conflict. One actually can feel the energy being drained from the organization.

Respect is that condition where we acknowledge and celebrate diversity of thought, character and individuality. People honestly care about one another. In a culture built on *respect*, consideration is extended to each person in an equitable manner. This contributes to a happier, more dynamic environment, where employees *feel* that they are wanted and valued. In turn, they will want to achieve higher levels of performance, quality and service.

Open Communication

It is amazing how poorly we communicate. At one extreme is outright obfuscation, of which most of us are not guilty (probably because it requires highly honed skills). But most of us will concede that we often protect certain information, filter other information, and tend to engage in one-way communication, as if the interaction was a skirmish to be won or lost. Worst of all, few of us practise *active listening*. As a result, most communication tends to be fuzzy and unsatisfying.

High performance environments have trusting, two-way communication. Information is shared openly and discussion replaces “*telling*”. The norm is to actively solicit employees’ opinions and insights. As employees become more involved, real collaboration begins to develop and there is increased *conversation* regarding how best to contribute to the organization’s success.

Active Engagement



Employers say that they want employees to “*buy-in*”. But if the opportunity to *buy-in* occurs only at the end of the process, then employees are somewhat like consumers at the mall and may exercise their freedom of choice by figuratively *shopping somewhere else*.

Participation must be integrated into the entire process. It is critical that processes be structured to *actively engage* all employees in:

- ◆ identifying issues, problems and opportunities
- ◆ conducting analysis
- ◆ solving problems
- ◆ developing alternatives
- ◆ implementing solutions

Asking employees to *buy-in* at the implementation stage, just doesn’t work. Employees are thinking human beings, not drones. Quality solutions best come from those directly doing a particular job and they need to vigorously participate in designing answers to their problems.

And guess what? Having been *actively engaged* in developing the solutions, employees are highly motivated to deliver success – it’s called “*Pride of Ownership*”.

So there’s the *secret pill!*

As a business owner or manager, it is your responsibility to create and maintain an environment that cultivates *mutual respect*, promotes *open communication*, and *actively engages* the workforce in developing solutions. By adopting this three-step approach, you will discover that you have released enormous creativity within your now highly motivated workforce.

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