

The Pride System: Building a Productive Workforce

Workers face dynamic and ever increasing challenges. A global economy of discriminating consumers has placed demands on employers never before seen. Managers face the task of finding, keeping, and motivating workers. Environmental pressures, rising health care costs, and the sophisticated needs of the workforce have placed management in a complicated and tenuous situation. The answer lies with creating a work environment that motivates people toward exceptional performance. Supervisors and managers who maximize the potential, creative abilities, and talents of the entire workforce have a greater competitive advantage than those who don't. Motivated workers provide the insurance businesses desperately need in these chaotic times.

HOW TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE—THE PRIDE SYSTEM

Supervisors have the responsibility of creating a motivating working environment. According to Dr. Edwards Deming, "The aim of leadership should be to improve the performance of man and machine, to improve quality, to increase output, and simultaneously to bring pride of workmanship to people." A motivating environment is one that gives workers a sense of pride in what they do. To show supervisors and managers how to build a more productive work environment, I've created a five-step process called the PRIDE system. Leaders can improve motivation within their organizations by following this process:

Provide a positive working environment

Recognize everyone's efforts

Involve everyone

Develop skills and potential

Evaluate and measure continuously

STEP 1: PROVIDE A POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Motivation begins by first providing a positive work environment. Fran Tarkenton says to find what motivates people, "you have to find what turns people on." This is the most important factor in the process. A motivating working environment requires going above and beyond the call of duty and providing for the needs of the worker.

Walt Disney World Company provides an excellent work environment for their employees or "cast members." Employee assistance centers are spread strategically across the theme park. Some of the services included employee discount programs, childcare information, money orders, postage stamps, check cashing, and bus passes. The Walt Disney Company realizes that taking care of their employees' needs keeps them motivated, on the job and loyal to the company.

STEP 2: RECOGNIZE EVERYONE'S EFFORTS

Mark Twain once said, "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Personal recognition is a powerful tool in building morale and motivation.

A pat on the back, a personal note from a peer or a supervisor does wonders. Small, informal celebrations are many times more effective than a once-a-quarter or once-a-year formal event.

Recognition from one's peers is more motivating than from supervisors. United Services Automobile Association (USAA) provides "Thank You" note stationary for their workers. Employees are encouraged to say "Thank You" to each other for the help they receive at work. The most surprising thing happened on the first day USAA printed the notes . . . they ran out! The company couldn't keep up with the demand.

STEP 3: INVOLVE EVERYONE

Having workers involved at all levels of the business is a key element to improving morale and motivation. It also has a major impact on improving profit and productivity. The best way to involve workers is the use of teams and teamwork.

Businesses have found that teams improve productivity, increase morale and empower workers. Teams have decreased the need for excessive layers of middle managers and supervisors.

Johnsonville Foods located in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin has been a flagship of productivity improvement. Almost 90% of the workforce belongs to some type of team. The team, not management, decides who is hired, who is fired, and who gets a pay raise. Ralph Stayer, Johnsonville's Chief Executive Officer, reports that his company's productivity has risen by at least 50% since 1986. Teamwork has made a tremendous impact on the morale of the company.

STEP 4: DEVELOP WORKERS' SKILLS AND POTENTIAL

Training and education motivates people making them more productive and innovative. At Federal Express, all customer contact people are given six weeks of training before they ever answer their first phone call. Learning never stops and testing continues throughout their employment tenure. Every six months customer service people are tested using an online computer system. Pass/fail results are sent to each employee within 24 hours. They receive a personalized "prescription" on areas that need reviewing with a list of resources and lessons that will help. Federal Express' intensive training and development program has resulted in higher motivation and lower turnover.

There are many reasons training and development makes sense. Well-trained employees are more capable and willing to assume more control over their jobs. They need less supervision, which frees management for other tasks. Employees are more capable to

answer the questions of customers building better customer loyalty. Employees who understand the business complain less, are more satisfied, and are more motivated. All this leads to better management-employee relationships

STEP 5: EVALUATE AND MEASURE CONTINUOUSLY

Continuous evaluation and never ending improvement is the final step of the PRIDE system. Evaluation is a nonstop activity that includes a specific cycle of steps. The primary purpose of evaluation is to measure progress and determine what needs improving. Continuous evaluation includes, but is not limited to, the measurement of attitudes, morale, and motivation of the workforce. It includes the identification of problem areas needing improvement and the design and implementation of an improvement plan.

Businesses have searched far and wide for the competitive advantage, the best equipment, robotics, or the latest business technique. These devices provide only temporary solutions. The true competitive advantage is trained and motivated people proudly working together, contributing vitality and energy toward the goals of the enterprise.

Gregory P. Smith shows businesses how to build productive and profitable work environments that attract, keep and motivate their workforce. He speaks at conferences and is the President of a management consulting firm called Chart Your Course International located in Conyers, Georgia.

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