

EFFECTIVE METHODS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

K. Chala, O. Mezhinska-Bruy,

National University of Food Technologies

All companies want to improve employee productivity, but how often do they examine their own management practices as a means of attaining it? Studies consistently show that a disturbingly high number of non-management employees are disengaged, not working at full productive capacity. Staff management is sometimes a burden. Some staff repeatedly fail to do what you want them to. They make simple errors that drive you crazy. They seem to lack “common sense”. These are serious issues. Maybe you’re part of the problem. Try these simple but effective techniques.

1. Tell Them Exactly What You Expect

I’ll never cease to be surprised at managers who don’t take the time to tell staff exactly what they want. Sit down with your staff, tell them exactly what you expect, then get them to confirm their understanding: get them to tell you. You tell them. They tell you back. If you find yourself saying “But they already know that”, they probably don’t.

2. Distinguish Between Performance and Behaviour

“Behaviour is what you take with you. Performance is what you leave behind”. Emphasise the performance you want rather than the behaviour. Explain that behaviour is only important where it affects performance. Ensure your staff know the difference.

3. Be Specific

Avoid fuzziness. “Neat and tidy” is too general unless you say exactly what you mean by it. “Following routine maintenance procedures” is a statement of hope not expectation. Add “so that ... ” Then specify exactly what you want.

4. Make Expectations Measurable

If you can’t measure it, you shouldn’t expect it. “Maintain good customer relations” is bland and almost useless. You must specify how you’ll measure “good customer relations”. Your staff should be able to measure too so they’ll always “know how

they're going". If you expect salespeople to convert 2 out of each 5 cold calls, say so. Then provide the resources to make it happen.

5. Support

Put in place systems that support your expectations. If you expect 24 hour turnaround on repairs, make sure your systems actually create that turnaround time. If telephones must be answered a certain way, provide a script for your people to use.

6. Remove Obstructions

This can be a real problem. Obstructions can be physical such as poor equipment, mental or emotional such as lack of self esteem or peer pressure, or procedural: cumbersome rules that hinder performance. As long as obstructions or impediments exist, you won't get what you want.

7. Release Control To Them

Give successful employees and teams the opportunity to control their work and rewards. Structure a way for them to recommend and apply system improvements. Allow them some latitude in working hours when they reach certain predetermined standards.

8. Ask

Your employees' experience is a huge asset for you. Develop the habit of mining that experience. Be an "asker" more than a "teller". Use questions frequently. Ask "What do you think we should do?" "How can we improve this system?" "What's the best solution to this problem?" "How can we avoid this happening again?" Remember the old adage: "When we talk we repeat what we already know. When we listen we learn something new."

9. Praise

When they meet your standards tell them: over and over again. When they do better, find some extra reward. Praise and reward publicly and sincerely where possible all the time.

This is all simple stuff, not rocket science. But you, the manager, have to make it happen. And you have to persist so that it becomes normal in your business. Until

you do, you won't get what you expect. When you do, you won't believe there's any other way.

References:

1. <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/staff-management-techniques-59972.html>
2. <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/ten-ways-for-managers-to-motivate-employees.html>