

# The responsibility of motivating employees



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The scenario: My company had a good year in 2006, but I feel that many of my employees are going through the motions. I've had some turnover recently, too. I want to know how to better motivate my employees and make 2007 a better year for my business. What do you suggest?

Coach: Harvey Smith.

You have to get up out of your chair and sit on the other side of the desk. This business may be your baby; but not theirs. You have to engage them to raise the baby with you.

When business owners ask: "How can I get my people to feel the way I do about my company?" I respond with five questions:

- **How have you shared your vision with your employees?** Some people think this is hokey; but it's a key element of leadership. People want to feel purposeful by contributing to common cause. Without a compelling vision, we simply perform tasks; this leads to eventual apathy and absenteeism. Motivate your staff by painting a picture of success and help each person know how he or she contributes.

Think of a NASCAR pit stop. When a car pulls into the pit the value of the engineer, jack men, spotters, driver and gas catch man all are clear, and in under 15 seconds! Everyone knows they brought something to the team's success.

- **Do you have the right employees to match the job responsibilities?** Do they have the skill sets to be successful at their assigned position? Do you spend time deciphering what they need to be successful at their responsibilities? Or are you just hoping it will happen because you have bodies in place?

- **Do you understand what motivates each employee to maximize his or her strengths?** Look at that NASCAR pit crew again. What might motivate each member? Pride in servicing

a car in record time? The prestige that is associated with the NASCAR name? Relishing the win? Money? Knowing someone's motivation gives you insight when assigning responsibilities. "Motivational assessments" help map an understanding of employee performance. I suggest this valuable tool to all my clients.

- **Do you have ongoing employee training?**

Provide the resources that your people need to succeed. Create time for feedback from them. Listen. This follow-through is essential for success with a staff. It lets everyone know you're not just a one-shot deal and perpetuates his or her commitment to the cause.

- **Are you remembering to be human?** I've worked with many bright leaders. They tend to spend a lot of time in their heads – thinking about how to make their business better, yet almost ignoring what is going on around them. Employees feel disconnected when a manager doesn't regularly communicate. Micromanagers, egotists, order barkers and humorless bosses demotivate employees.

When President Gerald Ford passed away, news commentators and eulogies didn't dwell on his supposed clumsiness or his controversial Nixon pardon. They praised Ford's integrity, his practicality in surrounding himself with strong players. , his understanding of what made people tick and his decency with others, whether a world leader or a Grand Rapids constituent.

In this new year, strive to be memorable. Impact your own people with your actions. It's a huge commitment to be a strong leader; but the legacy of success is your payoff

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