

Make Your Work Life More Productive

Enjoying your work and helping your employees to enjoy working for you can lead to higher productivity, lower turnover and a better running organization. Here are some ideas you may find useful.

Set Priorities

Oscar Wilde once said, “Nothing focuses the mind like the sight of the gallows.” Both you and your employees should know what is important and focus on the high priority items. As a manager, you understand how everything in the business finally comes together to produce a profit. Identifying the critical items for success and then communicating the “how” and “why” can get everyone working toward the same objectives.

Set Deadlines

The newspaper industry revolves around deadlines. Everyone knows that for the morning paper to appear (in the morning), stories must be written, presses must print and trucks must deliver. Everyone knows the essential timing and responds. People like to know what is expected and when it is due. They respond to deadlines. Set realistic deadlines and help employees understand why a deadline has been set.

Pick some “Low Hanging Fruit”

Many businesses have multiple opportunities for improvement. Some are easier to achieve than others. By choosing some easy ones (and ones that can be accomplished relatively quickly), you may be able to achieve some quick success and energize the entire organization to accomplish more. Nothing breeds success like success.

Have Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

It is human nature to overestimate what can be accomplished in a short period of time and underestimate what can be accomplished over a long period of time. Take advantage of this tendency by giving employees some short-term projects where enthusiasm can carry the day combined with long-term projects that can produce significant positive change.

Hold Effective Meetings

Meetings take everyone’s time away from other tasks so make sure they are worth the time and effort. When scheduling a meeting, make sure the purpose of the meeting justifies the total time it is going to take. A one-hour meeting with eight people takes the equivalent of someone’s full workday. Be considerate of everyone’s time and avoid interruptions during the meeting.

An agenda can keep everyone focused. Setting a time limit at the beginning of the meeting will help produce conclusions because people will be less likely to get off track if they know how long they have to accomplish the purpose of the meeting.

Finally, don't let someone monopolize the meeting with off-subject items. Personal stories or humor can have a place in the workplace, but not if it detracts from the purpose of the meeting.

Learn to Listen

In most cases, your employees care about your business. They often have ideas and concerns that need to be addressed. Conveying a willingness to truly listen will encourage employees to offer constructive ideas (and sometimes criticisms) that can be important. Focus on what you are hearing, avoid rudely interrupting a speaker and respond. Effective listening can show you care about what is being said and that you respect the person speaking.