

Morale Problem? Look in the Mirror

Here are concrete ways you can improve staff motivation and boost productivity.

By Jim Clemmer

Many organizations are experiencing deep and debilitating morale crises. They're finding that their workers have quit their jobs—but they're still coming in to work every day.

Because dissatisfied employees can't produce satisfied customers, service levels suffer. And uninspired people don't make improvements to work processes.

Managers searching for reasons for plummeting morale and low motivation need to take a look in the mirror. Quality guru W. Edwards Deming points to the common cause of the problem: "The supposition is prevalent the world over that there would be no problems in production or in service if only our production workers would do their jobs in the way they were taught. Pleasant dreams. The workers are handicapped by the system, and the system belongs to management."

Motivation is an inside job. A manager alone can't motivate or revitalize people, just as a gardener can't grow plants without the right soil or weather. But a manager can create the conditions for self-motivation.

Conditions affecting morale are varied and complex. If you're wres-

Motivation is an
inside job.

The most important
question of all is: How do
you know?

tling with this issue, find guidance by answering these questions:

- Does your performance appraisal system hold people accountable for results that depend on a bigger process than they control?
- Is everyone in your organization well-trained, informed, and involved?
- Do reward systems encourage and reinforce high performance?
- Do you measure and manage those factors with the highest impact on customers, employees, and production and service processes?
- Are you hiring highly self-motivated people?
- Are supervisors, managers, and executives acting as effective coaches and team leaders?
- Are people skills and leadership ability key criteria in all promotions?

The most important question of all is: How do you know? Get the people whose motivation and morale you're concerned about to provide the answers to these questions. One organization tackled this task through a "dumb rules and forms" committee. Its mission was to search out and destroy all the demeaning and useless bureaucratic busywork that complicated the organization and turned people off.

The work ethic isn't dead. Workers want to take pride in their work,



belong to a winning team, and be part of an organization they can believe in. ■

Jim Clemmer (www.clemmer.net) is the bestselling author of Growing the Distance and an internationally acclaimed keynote speaker, workshop/retreat leader, and management team developer on leadership, change, customer focus, culture, and personal growth.

The work ethic isn't dead.
Workers want to take
pride in their work, and
belong to a winning team.

RESOURCES

- Kilmann, Ralph, "Managing Your Organization's Culture," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 3, No. 2.
- McKay, Shona, "Building Morale: The Key to Successful Change," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 13, No. 3.
- Natoli, Vincent, "The Organizational Personality & Employee Performance," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 21, No. 1.
- Neck, Christopher & Robert Ashcraft, "Inner Leadership: Mental Strategies for Nonprofit Staff Members," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 18, No. 3.

These resources are available at www.snpo.org/members.