

Building an Inspired Workplace

By Marilyn Vojta, M.A.

I recently asked a panel of psychologists whether the recent events would affect the way people view their needs in the future. Meaning, the severe economic changes, the overt terrorist attacks on our home front and the high unemployment numbers. Will we return to the basic need of security for our families and ourselves? And does that mean that we will be managing our careers differently, making more long-term stable choices?

Change always prompts new thinking strategies as individuals begin to rethink their life choices, specifically how to develop their career talents. In previous generations, one would find loyal employee who worked for companies for 25 years, never thinking of leaving for another company. Loyalty was based on the fact that "the company was a family" and they took very good care of you to guarantee you were a content employee. Getting a reward at the 20, 25, 30 year mark was considered a high honor and valued by the employee who reached that goal. In return, employees trusted the system and were often promoted and challenged with a variety of responsibilities afforded to an individual by the company. You were recognized for your hard work and dedication by a promotion often granted when the company deemed you ready for your new challenge. The ranks of middle management were bursting with talent, waiting for the recognition that the company valued their contribution and the opportunity to demonstrate an employee's capabilities. This was the early reward systems of corporations, simple motivational tools linked with job security.

As the 1980's and the new generation baby boomers entered the workforce at numbers around 77MM, the single company loyalty began to change. The ability to make choices and think independently gave greater stimulation to this new generation of professionals. Individuals began to manage their career selections, disenchanted with a single company dominating their choices and lives. The average time spent at a company decreased, thus impeding the established loyalty of years before. The new prerequisites were the ability to be exposed to a variety of processes and systems, different cultures and corporate strategies. As an employee, you could now bring more learnings, understandings and a broader knowledge base to solve any impeding problems. This new thinking forced many "loyalists" to seek new opportunities to be more marketable and able to "climb the ladder" faster. The result was the average time at a company decreased to 3.5 years in the early 1990s. Many were shocked that

corporations would encourage this movement, but before the challenge could be adequately assessed, the business world began to experience one of its fastest growth eras. The mid 1990's started the launch of the internet, cutting edge technology and soon a new industry, one that was named for what it was, the "dot com" world of the information highway. Like its infrastructure, human capital performance was measured by speed, quickness, flexibility, and the world of unknowns, "entrepreneurism", and money. This was a time where the "Horatio Alger" story was faster than imagined. Behind the Baby Boomers comes Generation X numbering 44MM and leading a widespread influx of a new corporate America, created on barely understood principles. Corporations built on strong foundations found themselves forced to change their culture and philosophies to keep top employees who found the "urge to jump" to this counter-cultural experience strong. Many traditional companies changed long standing procedures to institute casual attire, more decision making at middle management and a host of new perks. The quick rise gave way to "fast fall" and many who had left for the exciting "amusement park world" of the dot.coms, looked to return to the stability and foundation of the environment they had left.

The choices so important to employees today are being exercised, but what is lacking is the knowledge of what motivates them and renders useful their well-developed expertise. Organizations need to know the things that are most motivating to employees and relatively easy to institute. Corporations must:

- Learn to attract, retain and maximize their people
- Communicate their people value
- Link business strategies with employee development
- Challenge and reward employees

To do this, companies must identify the unique factors and conditions that motivate and stimulate their people, thereby sustaining individual morale and maximizing productivity. If challenge and reward result in productivity, the key is to know what challenges each employee and rewards accordingly. Assessing your organization to find out what factors motivate and stimulate them becomes critical. Taking this information, businesses can then establish strategies and solutions that will increase performance and establish an inspired workplace.

Vojta & Associates

Consultants in Human Performance Management
TargetYou™ - a technology-based retention strategy tool
Stamford, CT 06902 203•357•8022
info@targetyou.net