

# Managing During Challenging Times

---

By Marilyn B. Vojta

**A**t a time when corporations need to improve performance by increasing the energy and focus of their people, "morale busters" are working against them. Anything that distracts employees from their established objectives becomes an obstacle and lessens the chances of goal attainment.

The variable nature of the economy, mandates that companies think long-term, as well as short-term, when giving attention to internal company morale. Businesses should be identifying, grooming and providing inspiration to those who show promise as future leaders or outstanding contributors. To sustain their motivation and maximize their productivity, manager's need to identify the unique factors and conditions that motivate and stimulate them. It's amazing what people will do if they feel valuable to an organization. Your success as a manager will be determined by your ability to elicit extraordinary performance from your people, therefore, company's should constantly re-evaluate methods to tap into their human potential.

So how do we assure our internal resources that we are committed and loyal to them?

**1. Communicate a consistent, positive message about the company's potential** - Develop a cohesive approach of communication. This builds trust internally with employees and it's that trust in management that also gets communicated to customers outside the company. Truly effective senior managers tend to be risk-takers, thereby confident in their ability to make things happen. It's this initiative and aggressive style that should lead the potential of realistic business growth, even in unforgiving economic times. Over communicate the "state of the business" utilizing optimistic, but realistic strategies. The more unified and positive senior management's approach, the greater the belief in the goal attainment by employees.

**2. Allocate Skills & Talents Appropriately** - Reassess the abilities of your employees and know their potential. Maximizing the potential of employees during difficult economic periods becomes critical to any type of business growth. Identify individuals who are best qualified to handle new responsibilities. Designing and developing a lean talented, focused organization will depend on reallocating responsibilities at all levels and are directly linked to an employee's skills. This requires an objective assessment of abilities and strengths

within the organization. Reassess skills, potential growth, personalities and background knowledge periodically. Design working relationships that will "cross-pollinate", i.e. everyone learns something of value from each other and builds solutions that are successful for the organization. Realize that each team becomes a small business that requires a microstructure of the organization's overall objectives.

**3. Take the Company's Temperature** - Listen to company communications...what are employees repeating, any rumors or false information. Catch them quick and respond to avoid exaggeration and inflation of facts which can cause rumors and incorrect speculation. Encourage senior management to be visible, talk about problems or concerns with a heightened understanding of resolution. Realize that every employee has different needs and a varied interpretation of events. Take time to support each person's reactions and promote open communication. Remember, there is a direct correlation between being a "great place to work" and overall success of a company.

**4. Build a Loyal Following** - A loyal employee is one who sticks through hard times, not one who cuts and runs as soon as it becomes clear times will remain hard and as long as they can trust senior management to guide the company to a successful future. People need to feel a sense of shared values, personal involvement, sense of purpose and appreciation for their contributions. Consider doing a lifestyle survey to determine what is really important to employees this will identify their needs, expectations and concerns. Critical information to retaining strong employee morale.

Floundering morale can be highly detrimental to an organization especially after corporate changes. An individualized approach to communications, career development and management is the key to harnessing employee's energy when their productivity is more crucial than ever.

---

*Vojta & Associates  
Consultants in Human Performance Management  
TargetYou™ - a technology-based retention tool  
Stamford, CT 06902 - 203•357•8022 -  
mbv@targetyou.net*