

### ENERGIZING EMPLOYEES: THE POWER OF I'S

I'm convinced that the most important things managers can do to develop and maintain motivated, energized employees have no cost, but rather are a function of the daily interactions that managers have with employees pertaining to work in the context of employees' jobs. I remember some of the best from the first letter of the word, which I call "The Power of the I's."

- **Interesting and Important Work**—Everyone should have at least part of their job be of high interest to them. As the management theorist Frederick Herzberg once said, "If you want someone to do a good job, give them a good job to do." Yes, some jobs may be inherently boring, but you can give anyone in such a job at least one task or project that's stimulating to that person. Name him or her to a suggestion committee that meets once a week, or to some other special group. The time away from the regular job is likely to be more than made up with increased productivity.
- **Information, Communication and Feedback on Performance**—With presumed employment for life largely a thing of the past, employees want more than ever to know how they are doing in their jobs and how the company is doing in its business. Start telling them how the company makes money and how it spends money. Make sure there are ample channels of communication to encourage employees to be informed, ask questions and share information. At least some of the communication channels should directly involve management in nonintimidating circumstances. Soon you'll have them turning out the lights when they're last to leave a room.
- **Involvement in Decisions and a Sense of Ownership**—Involving employees—especially in decisions that affect them—is both respectful to them and practical. People that are closest to the problem or the customer typically have the best insight as to how a situation can be improved. They know what works and what doesn't, but often are never asked for their opinion. As you involve others, you increase their commitment and ease in implementing any new idea or change.
- **Independence, Autonomy and Flexibility**—Most employees—especially experienced, top-performing employees—value being given room to do their job as they best see fit. All employees also appreciate having flexibility in their jobs. When you provide these factors to employees based on desired performance, it increases the likelihood that they will perform as desired—and bring additional initiative, ideas and energy to the job as well.
- **Increased Opportunity for Learning, Growth and Responsibility**—Everyone appreciates a manager who gives credit where it is due. The chances to share the successes of employees with others throughout the organization are almost limitless. In addition, most employee development is on-the-job development that comes from new learning opportunities and the chance to gain new skills and experience. Giving employees new opportunities to perform, learn and grow as a form of recognition and thanks is very motivating to most employees.

Behind all of these techniques is a basic premise of trust and respect and having the best interests of your employees at heart. You will never get the best effort from employees today by building a fire under them; rather, you need to find a way to build a fire within them to obtain extraordinary results from ordinary people.