

Improve employee morale by making people the firm's bottom line



MANAGEMENT

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It's no secret that the U.S. economy has slowed down in the past months. As a result, thousands of corporations are struggling,

being forced to cut costs, decrease benefits and even lay off valuable employees.

These solutions to economic hardship, although they may seem logical, take their toll on employee morale and commitment. In the long run, it is this trend that can make or break a company's success.

For meaningful, long-term growth and success, organizations must take full advantage of their most valuable resource: their employees. The workforce of a company is the driving force behind the creation, innovation, and production so critical to any organization's livelihood. If every employee and department doesn't work together like a well-oiled machine, there most certainly will be problems.

Commitment and adherence to a company's objectives cannot be forced upon its employees. For this reason, each employee must be given a set of personal goals to work toward. These goals have to work in harmony with the goals of other individuals, other departments, and the company as a whole. Every person must understand the company's objectives in regard to his own job, so that meeting company goals becomes a personal undertaking for each employee.

This kind of synergy is only possible under an intricate system of strategic alignment. This system of alignment focuses on five important areas, each in connection with all the others, creating a comprehensive, holistic approach to company operations. These areas include:

- Mission and vision. A vision statement paints a vivid picture of what the leaders want the business to look like in the long term. A mission statement presents the reason the business exists – the core products and services and their benefits to the customer.

- Business communication. For every 45 minutes spent on making a decision, at least 15 more should be spent on how it is communicated to employees. Taking every opportunity to let people know the strategic direction will help them to work toward the right things on their jobs.

- Policies and procedures. Unsuccessful initiatives don't fail in their intent – they fail in how they are executed and implemented. Reviewing what goes on day-to-day goes a long way to ensuring that the system isn't actually creating barriers to success. Even more important than written policies are the unwritten ways the work is actually carried out.

- Performance management and development. Excellent companies expect excellent performance, have managers and supervisors that model the right behavior and keep their standards at highest levels. Training is always consistent with business purpose and strategy and not just because it is the newest fad.

- Rewards. Commitment is gained only when people are able to meet their own goals while meeting that of the business. Rewards are individual. Not everyone is looking for the same thing. But all must be clearly recognized for doing the right things, in the right way.

If each of these five corporate elements hang together in proper balance, they lend to the success of the other four. If conflict exists between policies and communications, for example, workforce synergy will be disrupted and the company as a whole will suffer.

In this day and age, too many organizations focus solely on the bottom-line, forgetting to consider all that goes into accomplishing those numerical goals. In the end, it is the workforce and the way it performs together which will make or break a company's success. Creating synergy in the way people work and think is the only way to ensure lasting prosperity. ■

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