

Employee Motivation Starts With You!

I wanted to share the following article with you. This article is a reprint from the June 2006 "Branch Managers Letter" written by Lana Chandler. Lana can be reached at Lana@BranchManagersLetter.com.

"The first time I heard someone say you can't motivate other people, I thought that sounded crazy," recalls Taye Cairnes, President of Taye H. Cairnes, Inc. The truth is you can't make someone do something unless they want to do it, short of threatening violence. What you can do is create a culture of respect and a motivating environment." To bring out the best in people, start with your own skills. What is it like to work for you? "Take a look at how you treat people," advised Cairnes. "The way you speak, treat, and actually feel about people shows in your behavior. When people feel respected, they work harder and have less absenteeism. And the people who are motivated anyway really shine."

A "Culture of Respect"

"A culture of respect and a motivating environment – you cannot have one without the other," Cairnes says. "If employees do not feel respected, they will not be motivated. The more you show respect and encouragement, the more motivated someone becomes to want to be successful." It's your choice whether you treat people as *more than* or *less than*. If you treat them 'less than', that's how they behave. Treat them as more than, then that's what you get.

"Get out of your comfort zone and address inappropriate behavior," advised Cairnes. Employees aren't the only ones who display inappropriate behavior. Sometime leaders unintentionally do, too. De-motivators include:

- Not being a team player
- Being bossy over other people
- Inappropriate humor
- Slacking off and not pulling your weight

Create a Motivating Environment

"Great leaders are experts at creating a motivating environment," says Cairnes. She offers these tips:

Care about each person's success. Effective leaders have an innate sense of wanting their team to succeed. Project a sense of belief in each person. When it's true, let them know they're a great addition to the team. Don't just blow smoke because people know if you're not sincere.

Realize that you set the weather pattern. If it's stormy all the time in the branch, it's the leadership. If it's sunny, that's the leadership.

MBWA – Management By Walking Around. Talk to every employee everyday. Engage people in conversations that let them know you want to support them. Hand out positive feedback. "If you talk to everyone everyday, they'll feel more safe and comfortable around you. You'll also stop problems before they become crises because you'll be more in tune with what's happening," says Cairnes.

Compliment good behavior when you see it. Good behavior that gets noticed gets repeated. Praise in public and confront in private. Employees lose respect for managers who humiliates them in front of other employees or clients.

Avoid being bossy. There's a difference between being "boss" and "being bossy". "Leadership is about action, not position. It's about behavior vs. role," Cairnes says. "Effective leaders manage things and lead people."

Encourage employees to solve their own problems. When you jump in and solve employees' problems, you send a subtle message that says *You're not smart enough to solve the problem yourself.*

Create a safe environment for mistakes. Check your reaction when someone errs. Even if you don't say anything, your body language can speak volumes. You need to be able to say the employee.....I've made that mistake myself. How do you think you would handle it differently next time? Focus on learning.

Draw boundaries and communicate your expectations. Employees need to understand what constitutes appropriate behavior. Furthermore, make sure you deal with the problem employee. Letting people get away with inappropriate behavior de-motivates others.

Verbalize your commitment to help employees be successful. Consistently let employees know that you're here for them. A great coaching question that motivates is...*I want you to be successful. How can I help you? What tools do you need?*