

Solutions

"The problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

Albert Einstein

Online Performance Strategies for Managers and Supervisors from the Division of Personnel

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Quick Tip:

From the editors of *Solutions*

Practice what you preach.

When you manage, you have to manage by example. Don't expect your employee's to put in 100% effort if they don't see the same effort from you. You should walk the talk. Lead by example, show your employees that you love what you do and your attitude will become contagious!

Looking for previous issues of *Solutions*? [click here](#).

Reminder!

It's not even debatable anymore. Study after study makes it perfectly clear that employee recognition is critical. In fact, nothing seems to be more important and more motivating than recognition.

National Underwriters discovered that when they surveyed more than 200 managers. Recognition for a job well done out-rated money and challenge. On a scale of importance from 1 to 6, their respondents gave recognition a 4.9, money 4.8, and challenging work 4.3.

In a 1999 Wichita State University survey, employees rated a manager's thanks as THE MOST motivational incentive of all. Unfortunately, 58% of the employees said they rarely received a personal thank you.

Even more conclusive, The Gallop organization studied more than 80,000 managers in 400 companies. They wanted to determine what keeps a company's BEST PEOPLE satisfied. Gallop came up with 12 factors, 3 of which related to recognition:

1. "In the last 7 days, have you received recognition or praise for a job well done?"
2. "Does your supervisor seem to care about you as a person?" and;
3. "Is there someone at work who encourages your development?"

FEATURE ARTICLE

Influencing

Good managers remember to recognize employees – great managers do it every day!

By Dr. Alan R. Zimmerman

Of course, most managers say they already know this. They say they know how important recognition is. However if all managers REALLY understood how important recognition is, then you wouldn't hear the number one employee complaint over and over again. And, of course, you know what that is.

Employees say, "You can do 100 things right and not hear a darn thing about it. You do one thing wrong, and they're right on your back."

That makes me wonder. Why do so few managers do a truly outstanding job of recognizing their employees. Perhaps they're from the "old school" that thinks people will get soft if they get recognized.

I know that sounds strange, but there are a lot of people who think that way. They think that expressed admiration of their children, spouses, friends, and coworkers will make them lazy. So their way of "encouraging" others is to take the attitude that nothing is ever good enough.

Baseball manager Casey Stengel tried that approach on Joe Garagiola one time. Casey said, "Joe, when they list all the great catchers, you'll be there listening."

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Good managers remember to recognize employees – Great managers do it every day

Continued from page 1

And one manager and salesperson stood looking at a map on which colored pins indicated the company representative in each area. The manager said, "I'm not going to fire you, Sherman, but I'm loosening your pin a bit just to emphasize the insecurity of your situation."

One of my seminar participants said her mother used that same approach--demeaning rather than recognizing. She told me she worked and worked for several years to do well in her classes at the university. In fact, she did so well that she made it into a highly prestigious honor society. But her mother said, "I used to think it was a big deal to make Phi Beta Kappa -- until you got it."

Marcus reported a similar story. He said that was his parents' approach to "recognition." He said if he took out the garbage, his mother would tell him, "It's about time you helped around the house. "If he got all A's and one B on his report card, his father would ask, "What did you do wrong to get the B?" Marcus continued. He said as a little child he really tried to please his Dad, to get his Dad's recognition. So one time he tried to keep his shoes in shape so they lasted a record six months. When he proudly showed them to his father, instead of praising him, his father pulled out a pair of shoes he bought 20 years before and said, "Beat that."

There's an employee recognition problem in too many organizations. As a result, some people are demoralized while others are demotivated. The demoralized ones say, "Nobody notices what I do. . . until I don't do it. "And the de-motivated ones are giving less than their full potential. As George Carlin said, "Most people work just hard enough to not get fired and get paid just enough money not to quit."

Well, all of that can be changed. You can release and inspire amazing performance when you know how to recognize team members.

But let me warn you. Don't make the mistake of thinking any praise is good praise. Some managers think that handing out indiscriminate praise is better than no praise at all. They're wrong. If you hand out praise the wrong way, at the wrong time or for the wrong reasons, it can do more harm than good. You've got to do it right.

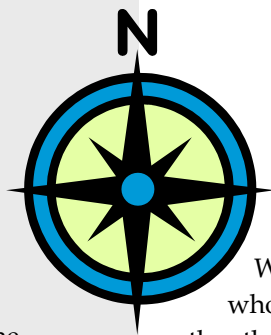
Action for Employee Recognition:

When it comes to recognition, what would people say about you? Would they say you're sincere, effective, and encouraging? Would they say they get all the recognition they need and deserve from you so they're equipped to do their very best? If not, consider giving this aspect of your management style a bit more thought and attention.

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Want to learn more...

Read *Simple Gestures that Say 'Thanks'* on page 3.



Teamwork

Helping team members balance conflicting priorities

When you're assigned to lead a team whose members work in departments other than yours and have to do their normal jobs while also serving on the team, your negotiation skills will be put to the test. To get the work done and keep morale high, you'll need to balance your project's demands against the other demands on your team member's time. This four-step approach can help:

- 1. Emphasize the opportunity.** Link the project to big-picture objectives like revenue or customer satisfaction. Also stress the benefits of being on the team, such as working on a high-profile project, making a wider set of contacts, and blazing new territory.
- 2. Identify possible conflicts.** Meet with each team member and identify his or her competing responsibilities and the amount of time he or she has available for the team's project. Talk, too, about what his or her manager expects so that the employee is not caught between you and the other manager.
- 3. Smooth the way.** Help team members balance priorities by: communicating often about progress and possible problems, keeping the schedule of deliverables as flexible as possible, reminding fellow team members of upcoming deadlines, providing resources and assistance promptly, and intervening tactfully with their managers if necessary.
- 4. Motivating and rewarding.** Build some celebrations into the team's schedule. For example, you might use group lunches to celebrate milestones the team reached or difficult problems they solved.

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Influencing Simple gestures that say ‘Thanks’

Sometimes a sincere “Thank you” is the best way to express your appreciation. Other times, a simple gesture adds power to your words. Here are some examples:

Say it online. Send a note of appreciation via e-mail. Tell the recipient specifically what you appreciate and why: “Thank you for proofreading my report. You saved me from making embarrassing errors.”

Pick up a pen and send a handwritten thank-you note. Those pack a big motivational punch because so few people take time to write them any more. You may be surprised to learn how often employees take thank-you letters home to show their family.

Dial up and say “Thanks.” Connecting verbally adds warmth to your appreciation – even if you reach voice mail.

Make it “official.” Create a small certificate that the person can hang up in the work area. That adds staying power to your words of praise.

Pass it on. Look for an opportunity to say something nice about the person when he or she can overhear you. Let your co-workers, your boss or your customers know how much you depend on the person’s contribution.

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Workforce Management

Court Ruling: Supervisors comments are evidence of retaliation under the FMLA

In the winter 2005 issue of *Solutions*, we discussed discrimination and retaliation under the Missouri Human Rights Act (“Attending work regularly is an essential function of a job”). In this issue we are going to discuss retaliation under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the importance of avoiding threatening remarks as well as consistent application of policies and practices.

In a recent 8th Circuit decision (*Hite v. Vermeer Manufacturing Company*, 05-2297 (8th Cir. May 9, 2006)), the federal appeals court discussed retaliation under the FMLA. Hite (the employee), who suffered depression, used FMLA during periods of incapacitation. However, her supervisor made it clear that he did not like the FMLA and threatened to terminate Hite for using FMLA. While the company’s human resource manager assured Hite she would not be terminated for using FMLA, Hite was eventually fired for misuse of a cell phone in violation of company policy (*Note: other employees were not fired for similar violations*). Hite sued and the jury awarded Hite over \$200,000 in total damages.

These days, most experienced supervisors are aware that the FMLA prohibits employers from discriminating or retaliating against an employee for asserting their rights under the Act. 29 U.S.C. §2612(a)(2). However, one must also understand the process for how the courts determine whether or not retaliation exists in order to avoid making critical and costly mistakes like those of the supervisor in the above case.

Established case law clearly outlines the following steps to make this determination:

1. **First, some adverse employment action must exist (in this case, the employee was fired);**
2. **Then the employee must show some evidence that the adverse action was connected to their use of FMLA (such as the supervisors comments here);**
3. **The employer then must show a basis for the action other than the FMLA use (i.e., the dismissal was due to cell phone policy violation);**
4. **Then the employee has an opportunity to establish that the other basis is not factually supported (such as inconsistent application of the policy).**

In the *Hite* case, the supervisor’s comments were enough evidence to support a connection (a.k.a. “casual connection”) between the employee’s FMLA use and her dismissal. This, coupled with the fact that others who abused the company’s cell phone policy had not been terminated which established that the company’s explanation lacked factual basis (a.k.a. “pretextual”), provided enough evidence for the court to rule in favor of this employee. Therefore, regardless of whether or not the employer actually agrees with the individual supervisor’s comments regarding FMLA, the fact that he made the remarks were enough to establish the connection.

References::

Darby v. Bratch, 287 F.3d 673 (8th Cir. 2002)
McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green, 411 U.S. 792 (1973)
Kipp v. Missouri Highway & Transportation Commission, 280 F.2d 893 (8th Cir. 2002)
Eliserio v. United Steelworkers of America, 398 F.3d 1071 (8th Cir. 2005)
Watson v. O’Neill, 365 F.3d 609 (8th Cir. 2004)
Logan v. Liberty Healthcare Corp., 416 F.3d 877 (8th Cir. 2005)
Erickson v. Farmland Industries, 271 F.3d. 718 (8th Cir. 2001)

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"Greatness is more than potential. It is the execution of that potential. Beyond the raw talent, you need the appropriate training; you need the discipline; you need the inspiration; you need the drive."

Eric A. Burns

"There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction."

John F. Kennedy

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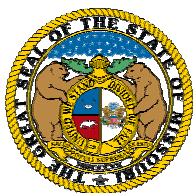
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Written Communication

When editing your own copy

Whenever you write something, you should know how to edit and polish your own work. Here are some guidelines to follow when editing for:

Brevity. Cut every word that adds nothing to meaning. Examples: Change "during the course of" to "during" and "few in number" to "few."

Clarity. Don't use vague adjectives when specific ones are called for. Don't write "We received numerous inquiries." Instead write "We received 14 inquiries."

Tone and style. Make sure your words sound as if they come from a human being – and an institution. Example: Instead of writing "Further notification will follow," write "I'll keep you informed."



Variety. Avoid starting each sentence with the same part of speech, such as a noun or pronoun. Caution: Don't try to start each sentence with a different part of speech. Just strive for some variety.

Content. Make your purpose immediately clear. Don't force your reader to wade through several paragraphs before understanding why you wrote the piece.

Paragraph strength. See to it that each paragraph deals with only one topic. Including too many topics will make your reader work too hard.

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Technical Knowledge

What's the final definition of "adverse employment action?" Supreme Court to decide

High court ruling will end conflict between appeal courts...

It's a phrase that's often heard in connection with retaliation cases: "adverse employment action."

Problem is, the phrase has come to mean different things to different federal circuit courts.

In the next few months, the Supreme Court is expected to hear a case that will finally define what qualifies as "adverse employment action" – and could change the playing field for organizations nationwide.

A difference of opinion

According to employment law firm Ogletree Deakins, the high court has several precedents to weigh.

The first, from the Fifth and Eighth circuits, says that there must be an "ultimate employment decision" (a termination or pay cut, for instance) to bring a retaliation claim.

Other circuits have held that any move that might block employees from engaging in protected activity – such as union organizing – constitutes adverse employment action. Still others hold that all that's necessary for a retaliation charge is a "materially adverse change in the terms and conditions of employment."

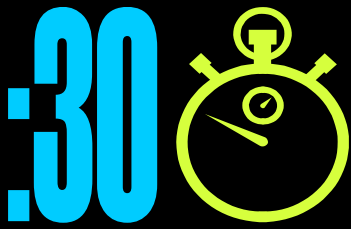
The case that will form the basis for a final definition is Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Company v. White, U.S. Supreme Court, No. 05-259.

We'll keep you posted.

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Self-Direction

Plan your week in



Experts say that you need only 30 minutes to plan your entire week. How to do it? Follow the OATS formula.

O: Objectives.

What results do you want to see by the end of the week? Write them down and rank them

A: Activities. What do you have to do to achieve your goals? List the necessary activities, and put them in sequence.

T: Time. How much time will each activity require? To plan realistically, allow yourself more time than you think you will actually need. This gives you flexibility if unexpected problems develop.

S: Schedule. Look at your calendar and decide when you can do each activity. Most people underestimate the power of a schedule, but you won't get anything accomplished if you don't schedule time to do it.

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"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest."

Mark Twain

Workforce Management

The Division of Personnel's Resource Center: Providing career development assistance for employees

Located within the Division of Personnel is a resource that can help supervisors and managers provide direction for employees who may be searching for a career change or advancement opportunities. The Division's Resource Center offers many services to applicants and state employees alike. However, the Center's primary focus is to: (1) assist individuals in locating job titles within the Missouri Merit System that match their specific expertise; (2) aid individuals in the use of the State of Missouri's electronic application system (EASe); and (3) provide information to help applicants and employees better present themselves to prospective interviewers.

Analysts in the Center help individuals understand how their knowledge, skills and abilities can be linked to specific Merit System job titles; and how gaining experience by working in specific jobs may help them advance to other jobs in the future. Analysts in the Center also help employees cross-reference a particular job title they may be aware of in one agency to other departments and functions located throughout state government.

Analysts also use categories of earned credit hours from colleges or universities to match employees with the jobs and functions that closely fit their chosen course of study. For example, an employee or applicant with at least 24 semester hours in the social or behavioral sciences (psychology, sociology, counseling, etc.) may be eligible for at least 10 different career choices ranging from workforce development to child welfare. Employees with a Bachelor's Degree in business administration may be eligible for positions ranging from office management to parks administration.

Through the Resource Center, employees can also receive assistance in completing and updating their online application (EASe). An analyst in the Center can help the employee correctly enter or update their personal information, interpret their register scores, update counties of availability for employment, and provide other data pertinent in finding and maintaining employment with the State of Missouri.

An analyst in the Resource Center can help an employee create or update their resume or application too. Employees can receive assistance in the best way to word, structure and refine their resume or application to give prospective agencies the information they need to make informed interviewing and hiring decisions.

Supervisors and managers in state government want to see their employees succeed. Sometimes that involves providing employees the resources they need to improve their marketability. Through the Center, supervisors and managers have another "tool" to help employees potentially advance in their careers while gaining additional knowledge of Missouri state government employment opportunities.

The Division of Personnel's Resource Center is located in Room 430 of the Truman State Office Building in Jefferson City. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 to 5:00 PM. No appointment is necessary. Employees may also call (573) 751-4162 and ask to speak to a resource analyst.

Written by:

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