Everybody agrees that leading people is extremely important in today’s world of work. Since many people are not self-starters, we have to find ways to move people in a positive direction to achieve desired results. The best approach is to lead by example, which includes the key activities described in this article.

Project a winning attitude. Whether you are the owner, vice president or manager, you must approach your job with a winning attitude. When things go wrong, you need to be solutions-oriented and get them fixed. By responding positively to negative situations, you will enhance your credibility as an action-oriented manager who is willing to get involved when problems occur. Instead of yelling at people and blaming them for mistakes, work with them to identify the problem and resolve it.

Mary Kay Slowikowski is an expert in designing and delivering human resource training applications.
**Watch your style.** What is your leadership style? How do you deal with people? Your style must include the following actions:

Collaborate and work with your people to discuss solutions to problems.

Be accessible. When somebody really needs to talk to you or needs your help, be there for him without griping or complaining.

Provide positive reinforcement when people do positive things, produce quality work or do more than what is expected. Give them positive feedback and let them know that you appreciate their efforts. Be supportive rather than critical.

Positive reinforcement should be specific. Know exactly why you’re giving positive feedback. Make sure it is due to progress or success on a job-related activity. Emphasize the positives, not the negatives. Build on the strengths of your people.

Don’t spend a lot of time dwelling on their weaknesses. If you want to be effective in providing positive feedback, you must manage by wandering around and observing what is happening on the job.

Positive reinforcement should be timely. The best time to give positive reinforcement is immediately or soon after the event occurs. By doing this you’re really telling people that you appreciate their contributions on the job.

Positive reinforcement should be relevant. Give positive reinforcement for small gains or contributions as well as for big ones. Since people operate at varying degrees of effectiveness, don’t ignore those that are slight or small improvements. When people realize that you

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**Making a Difference in Denver**

Terrie Miller, co-owner of Denver Drywall Company, Englewood, Colo., invited Consultant and Trainer Mary Kay Slowikowski of Slowikowski & Associates to facilitate a seminar on productivity improvement for the company’s administrative team. In attendance was the company controller, accounts payable manager, payroll accounting manager, secretary, benefits manager and hiring manager.

The day ended with the employees looking at their jobs in a new light. The idea was for each person to realize that their personal responsibilities to the company had a direct correlation to the success of the company’s future. They learned the importance of new ideas, job recognition, positive reinforcement and how everything applied to improved productivity on the job.

The administrative team also learned how to better master time spent on the job, time working with the field and how multitasking is essential in today’s marketplace.

By day’s end, everyone was working on case studies to apply the theories they had learned. The final phase of the workshop dealt with stress management and how important it is to cope with daily stress on the job.

Slowikowski’s program, “Productivity Improvement,” is a great enhancement to any construction company’s administrative team. Miller was excited by the results and hopes that other companies in the AWCI family take notice and offer the same to their people.

The grand finale of the day was an added benefit to the seminar titled “Bridging the Generation Gap.” Several more company employees attended this session, including the company executives. It was a very educational and interesting topic for young and old alike.
Terrie Miller (standing, second from left) of Denver Drywall Company and Slowikowski with the Denver Drywall administrative team.

care about their efforts to make things better, they’ll continue to produce.

Be an active listener. You can’t use ideas until you actively listen to what people are suggesting. When people come to you with a problem, make sure you get them to specifically identify the problem and its underlying causes. Then ask them if they have a possible solution. If the solution makes sense, implement it. This shows that you’re really listening.

Avoid blaming or criticizing others when a mistake occurs. Remember to attack the problem, not the person. When a person makes a mistake, do the following:

Ask him if he realizes that he has made a mistake. If he says “yes,” ask him to explain to you what went wrong. Avoid pointing out the mistake first.

Then ask him if he knows how to fix it. If he does, then all you have to do is agree with him and suggest he use that solution the next time.

If he doesn’t realize he has made a mistake, or if he doesn’t know how to fix it, then you must provide your expertise in a positive, supportive manner. Do some coaching.

Adopt an action-orientation. Encourage your people to take action. Encourage them to develop a sense of urgency, a “do it now” attitude. Encourage them to be innovative, to try new and better ways of doing things. When something works, make sure they tell you about it so that you can share it with the rest of the organization. It’s the “Ready-Fire-Aim Strategy.”

Be ready and willing to innovate.

Fire away with new ideas or techniques. Experiment. Learn from your attempts.

Aim those ideas that work. Share them...
DON'T BLAME OR CRITICIZE OTHERS. REMEMBER TO ATTACK THE PROBLEM, NOT THE PERSON

with other members of your organization.

To be effective, you have to make it happen! Build a positive work climate. Leadership and motivation go hand in hand.

About the Author
Mary Kay Slowikowski is an internationally known speaker, trainer and consultant at Slowikowski & Associates, Darien, Ill. She is also the first female motivational speaker to appear nationally on PBS. She is a marketing strategist who helps organizations design and develop training and consulting interventions, and she is an expert in designing and delivering human resource training applications.