What Good Employees Need and Want

By L. Douglas Mault

It is often thought that good employees’ most important desire is to be paid fairly and well for their work. However, experience shows there are many other areas where employee needs and wants, if attended to, can provide a work experience and environment that is mutually beneficial to the employer and the employees.

**Goals.** Performance planning is as important as performance appraisal. Provide them with a light at the end of the tunnel.

**Participation.** People want to be involved in as many aspects of assigned tasks as possible. The greater the involvement, the greater the buy-in and support.

**Guidance.** All people, especially those new to a job, want and need to know how well they are doing and where they stand. Feedback and direction are the keys. Don’t focus only on the negative; accentuate the positive.

**Encouragement.** People will usually give what is expected of them. The higher the expectation, the higher the performance. Look for the best in others, not the worst. If we lower expectations, performance will diminish. If you fail to continue to raise expectations, the organization can become stale.

**Recognition.** Praise is still one of the most effective forms of motivation. Positive feedback and reinforcement do work.

**Communication.** Give every person as much of a chance to express his feelings, attitudes and ideas as you give to yourself. Remember that most people will only communicate to the extent to which they are encouraged to do so.

**Competition.** Competition among people can be a great incentive to be more productive. Remember to have them compete against goals and competitors, not each other or against other departments.

**Reward.** All people are looking for some type of reward and recognition. This does not have to take the form of money. There are many other options. Sometimes merely calling attention to someone’s outstanding performance is all it takes.

**Growth.** If you do not provide enough opportunity within the organization, those with great talents are more likely to move on.

**Challenge.** The more challenging the work environment and the job, the more likely you will attract—and keep—good people.

**Achievement.** Many people want to be high achievers, even if they do not yet know how to do so. It is up to you to push them to their limits and then train them to go further than they have in the past.

**Belonging.** Most people need to be part of a good organization. Create a positive organization with which people are proud to be identified.

**Management awareness.** Given the growing diversity of the work force today, it is important that we take time to try to understand and accept differences and to manage them effectively.

**Authority.** Authority is necessary, but it should be exercised in a responsible manner. Remember that if you assign responsibility and accountability, you must also assign authority so that people can reach their goals. Remember, too, that people will reflect your exercise of authority in their exercise of it.

About the Author

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