MOTIVATION: Its Elusive Linkage

As old and as recognized as the linkage is, it still manages to remain elusive.

And today’s construction climate finds many wall and ceiling contractors — and especially their supervisory personnel — almost frantically striving for the magic that eludes many wall and ceiling contractors — and especially their supervisory personnel — almost frantically striving for the magic that eludes them. Motivation and get a decent day’s work are the only answers. If a man thinks of himself as a “failure” he will inevitably fail, regardless of how hard he tries to succeed.

As an example, a journeyman with a low self-concept is so convinced he cannot remember and follow safety procedures that he creates the conditions unconsciously which will bring about an accident.

For many individuals this is but one cycle in a destructive downward spiral.

Ideas Agree

The psychological principle is: an individual’s personality consists of numerous ideas and concepts all of which tend to be consistent with each other. And any single idea which doesn’t agree with the consistent group will be simply rejected.

The man’s personality—a unified, well-established set of propositions which form his self-identification—arises out of these ideas.

And this self-concept represents a powerful but invisible ceiling that will stop him from attempting to rise or progress. When the self-concept is primarily negative, every decision made must necessarily filter through motivational blocks and memories of past failures.

This produces a person who is burdened with doubt; one who is convinced he is not entitled to much and thus is not capable of much, so he seldom reaches for anything better or responds to efforts to increase production.

A journeyman who enjoys and takes pride in his work will continue to perform in that manner because his self-concept won’t allow him to do it any other way. Conversely, a journeyman with a relatively low opinion of himself will keep bumping into his invisible ceiling despite the most noble of appeals.

The latter kind of employee can be helped enormously by a self-motivated supervisor who assists him in setting high goals for himself. When the employee converts all of these goals into a string of achievements that he can think about, in the present tense, over and over to himself every day of his life, he is going to change the way he thinks.

The positive achievements soon become internalized and provide a characteristic way of responding to life and interpreting experience. The former low opinion of himself is replaced by confidence and self-assurance.

For the employee fortunate enough to be associated with a supervisor who is motivated, it is almost inevitable that he will begin thinking wholesome, positive thoughts.

Strength Develops

As a result, he will start looking to his power, his strength, and will begin to approach his work with positive expectancy without giving mental recognition to the possibility of defeat.

Gradually, his low self-concept will become something of the past. The greatest challenge faced by a motivated supervisor lies in helping the negative employee because of the natural, human tendency to relate to employees whose responses and motivation are more similar to his own. The supervisor’s efforts to reach production goals are more likely to succeed and this reaction tends to reinforce the supervisor’s
own self-concept of an effective leader.

That isn’t true with the non-motivated individual, and there may be a number of failures until a change can be brought about.

No one likes failures. But recalling past failures occurs so much by so many people that even the most critical onlooker might mistakenly think they do enjoy it.

The failure to accomplish something is simply too prevalent for it to retain overwhelming importance. And a past miscue is significant only when it becomes embedded in the memory to the extent that it becomes a motivational block.

Eliminate Negativism

An effective supervisor realizes that negative thinking can be reduced and most of the time can be eliminated by emphasizing such points of self-discipline as:

- Establishing reasonable, attainable goals
- Sharing responsibility
- Evaluating past failures realistically
  - Minimizing past failures
  - Helping other people; when a person helps another, he also helps himself
- Ego building by positive belief in oneself
- Concentration on past successes, especially recent ones
- Reducing conditions which tend to create anxiety

Even among the most positive of people it is a strange but not uncommon trait in human nature to look back and re-experience failures. And this invariably will interfere with an employee’s maximum productivity.

He must teach himself to motivate himself in the present tense.

One observer holds up a good rule for a progressive line by saying: “Don’t ever look back . . . unless you plan to go that way.”

Satchell Paige, the famous baseball pitcher, said it another way: “Don’t look over your shoulder . . . they might be gaining on you.”

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