How Persuasive Are You?

Here’s a Short Quiz That Will Measure Your Motivating Profile — and Help Determine if You Really Are Persuasive

By: Joseph Arkin

You may shout, “Get the lead out!” but is this really a keep-it-moving technique?

Volumes have been written by industrial psychologists on how to motivate, instruct and spur workers to a high level of proficiency. All of their findings could be boiled down to the fact to get results you must give directions that are understood. The request for something to be done should be persuasive and worded properly.

Whether to use a reward, the threat, or Freudian psychology is the crux of the problem.

Listed below is a true/false quiz to show you how your persuasive tactics compare with those of motivation experts.

Questions:
1-Should you set impossible deadlines if you want an employee to work harder? T F

Answers:
False. Unless he’s a wizard, he can’t do the impossible. This may not bother you as long as he’s at top speed, but if he knows he’s doomed to fail . . . why should he knock himself out trying?

2-Should you let an employee try his own way of doing a job? T F

True. Going by the book may work for you, but there’s always the chance an innovative approach
“Volumes have been written . . . (but) all of their findings could be boiled down to get results you must give directions that are understood.”

you never thought of will work just as well. Even if it doesn’t, your employee will be more highly motivated to do it your way—because you let him try it first.

3-Pay a man more money and he’ll work harder?  T  F
False. According to motivational experts, studies about employer/employee relationships show that salary ranked only fourth in a list of what motivates workers. The study showed employees would “get the lead out” faster if company policy and administration, type of supervision and working conditions were improved first.

4-Expect the worker to do only what he’s told and he’ll succeed?  T  F
False. If he’s motivated by a desire to get ahead, he’ll do more than he’s told. Let him offer suggestions, ask questions, take on added responsibilities and you’ll be persuaded he deserves a promotion.

5-After you give instructions, do you ask an employee to repeat them?  T  F
True. When you give someone time to explain exactly what he does understand, you’ll help him realize what he doesn’t. Don’t ask simply “Do you understand?” No one wants to embarrass himself by answering a flat “No”. And who can work confidently if he doesn’t know what he’s doing!

6-Tell your employees the firm is dying and they’ll work harder?  T  F
True. Nobody wants to listen to prophecies of doom, yet there is a high unemployment rate and self-preservation (and being in debt for credit purchases) motivates the employee to keep the firm from going under.

7-Don’t watch someone work, and he’ll work faster?  T  F
True. When there’s someone constantly looking over your shoulder, you tend to concentrate on the fact you’re being watched, rather than the job itself. Give an employee room to work and he’ll give his work more attention.

8-Should you motivate your employees to take courses or pursue reading to further their educations?  T  F
True. In most firms remembering the date of the Battle of Hastings has no relation to an employee’s future success. But some reluctant employees can be persuaded to study and add to their working knowledge if you provide them with exciting collateral material (a subscription to this magazine, for instance) or share in the cost of attending an educational institution.

9-When an employee has a problem, let him handle it himself, if possible?  T  F
True. The instant gratification he’ll feel because you solved his problem won’t motivate him to seek his own solutions for future troubles. In fact, your constant help may actually undermine his self-confidence. Let your employee find his own answers as often as possible.

10-If you want someone to do you a big favor, remind him of everything you’ve done for him?  T  F
False. Approach it this way and you’re asking him to pay a debt. No one likes to get a “past due” notice. But a favor properly worked can make someone feel needed. If you honestly admit you want help, you’re more apt not to be turned down.

Now, let’s rate how you made out.

10 correct: No one can refuse you anything, you’re a born diplomat.
7-9 correct: When you say, “Please,” objections usually tumble.
5-6 correct: Your persuasive techniques could use some sharpening.
0-4 correct: You couldn’t motivate someone to cash in a winning lottery ticket. Re-read the correct answers and think before you ask for a favor.