



UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA

EXTENSION

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Creating a Positive Workplace for Your Associates¹

Amanda M. Ruth, Chip Crawford, Allen F. Wysocki, and Karl W. Kepner²

Introduction

A positive work environment can mean the difference between success and failure for an organization. There are many ways in which managers and supervisors can create positive workplaces for their associates. To begin, they must define what a positive workplace is by establishing good relationships, improving teamwork, and fostering innovations.

Definition of a Positive Workplace

There are many definitions of what constitutes a positive workplace. The authors agree with White's definition that it is a place where associates (employees) are happy and motivated (White, 2002; HRZone, 2000). There are many ways to create a positive workplace (e.g., establishing good relationships between managers and associates).

Creating a Positive Workplace

The manager-associate relationship is the variable that often has the greatest impact on associate performance (White, 2002). It is important for managers to listen and communicate sincerely with their associates and provide positive

reinforcement. Three ways to develop a sincere manager-associate relationship are balance, timing, and clarity (White, 2002). Balance means having set standards for reinforcing actions. Timing means recognizing actions or achievements when they occur. Clarity means keeping praise simple and specific.

In addition, managers must also promote interpersonal relationships between associates. Teamwork increases productivity, quality, and customer service (Valentine, 2001). It encourages associates to get involved and share information, which improves the overall quality of the organization (Valentine, 2001). By working together, associates disseminate new information to each other, which can produce fresh insights and innovations (Valentine, 2001).

Positive workplace relationships also can have external effects. Customer satisfaction can be increased by associates' ambiance—happy associates lead to happy customers (Valentine, 2001). It is common for management to overlook the associates and focus only on customers. It is easy for customers to spot dissatisfied associates. Therefore, it is important to create and maintain associates' morale

-
1. This is EDIS document HR 012, a publication of the Department of Food and Resource Economics, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. Published May 2002. Please visit EDIS at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
 2. Amanda M. Ruth, graduate student, Agricultural Education and Communications; Chip Crawford, graduate student, Agricultural Education and Communications; Allen F. Wysocki, Assistant Professor, Department of Food and Resource Economics; and Karl W. Kepner, Distinguished Professor, Department of Food and Resource Economics; Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences/University of Florida/Christine Taylor Waddill, Dean.

to improve customer satisfaction and increase productivity (White, 2002).

Mission Statements

The best way to create a positive interactive workplace is by creating a value-centered group mission statement that is endorsed by management. Workshops should be conducted on a regular basis to empower the mission statement and rewards and punishments should be used to enforce the mission statement.

Creating a Mission Statement

The goal of a mission statement should be to establish a set of values that all of the associates will respect and follow (Valentine, 2001). Management should identify the values and goals that the associates have for the company and reinforce those values and goals. It is important that all of the associates participate in the process and agree to the mission statement.

Endorsing a Mission Statement

It is important for management to endorse the mission statement and be held accountable for its success (Valentine, 2001). For example, everyone employed in the company should be encouraged or required to attend regular meetings and workshops to show their support of the mission statement.

Reinforcing a Mission Statement

Company documents and policies are not effective unless practices are enforced. Therefore, after creating the mission statement, meetings and workshops should be held on a regular basis to discuss the company's progress in applying the shared values. For example, interactive workshops could quickly gather associate feedback to promote participation and a sense of teamwork within the company.

Only after the mission statement has been established and thoroughly communicated should rewards and punishments be considered. Evaluating participation can easily be incorporated into job plans and performance appraisals. Associates should be able to list ways they are reaching the goals of the

mission statement. According to Valentine (2001), associates become team players when the team's values are clearly established and appealing to them. Those who support the mission statement should be recognized and rewarded, while those who refuse to participate should be warned and then penalized if their participation does not increase. If the associate's refusal to participate affects company morale, termination may be necessary.

Conclusion

Creating a positive workplace is critical to a company's success. It is important for managers to define a purpose, set clear goals, and use appropriate positive reinforcement to motivate associates (White, 2002). One way to do this is by creating and enforcing a mission statement that is beneficial to both associates and customers (HRZone, 2000). By defining what is acceptable behavior and vigorously facilitating a harmonious environment, management can create positive workplaces that benefit everyone (Valentine, 2001).

References

- HRZone. (April 24, 2000). Associate recognition and motivation. Academic Emporia.com. Retrieved February 27, 200 online at <http://academic.emporia.edu/smithwil/00spmg444/eja/leach.html>
- Valentine, Scott. (2001). Four suggestions for a positive interactive workplace. The CEO Refresher at <http://www.refresher.com/ceo.html>
- White, Terry. (2002). The human element. One more time: Tell me about motivation. TheFabricator.com. (January 10). Retrieved on February 26, 2002 online at http://www.thefabricator.com/xp/Fabricator/Articles/Experts/Article194/Article194_p1.xml