

Too Many Employees Who Don't "Get It"? ...maybe the problem isn't them! (Part 2 of 2)

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In Part 1 of this article, we discussed some of the frustrations business owners feel about employee behavior and commitment when it doesn't seem consistent with their own goals and values for the business. We talked about two things that owners can do to proactively to set the stage for reducing these disconnects: 1) hiring people with the right personality for the company culture, as well as the right skill sets for the position, and 2) making sure that the owner's vision and values are clearly communicated to - and understood by - each employee.

In this issue, we focus on two additional-and equally important-actions which owners can use to boost employee performance.

Am I Clear on How Performance Is Measured?

One of the best ways to improve employee performance is to provide a clear explanation – *before*, not *after*, the fact - of how performance will be measured. Ideally, this information is contained in a job description (Don't have job descriptions in your company? It might be a good idea to start working on them!). Even if you don't have job descriptions, you should still establish performance metrics and communicate them – in writing – to each and every employee. Be sure to explain how these metrics relate to compensation and bonuses. And ask questions to ensure that this information is understood

Clarity around performance metrics will go a long way towards eliminating inefficiencies that inevitably occur when a well-meaning employee thinks he/she ought to be doing "X", when the owner is expecting "Y". You'll be amazed at the improvement in performance and morale!

Am I Rewarding Performance Often And Visibly?

Ever seen a business where the owner makes all the decisions? Where employees line up to ask the owner what to do next? Ever wonder why?

Well, there's a good chance that, at one time, some of these very same employees were self-starting, motivated people (at least the ones who are still here!). But the owner, a stereotypical technician/perfectionist, had no resilience in his/her standards of excellence and, almost without realizing it, critiqued (criticized?) every task, every decision which deviated in the least from the high standards he/she had always held (and which may very well have motivated the owner to start an independent business in the first place!). The problem is that, over time, this reaction to employee initiative takes a toll....not only on the employees, but on the business and – ultimately – the owner.

The truth is, while perfection in a product or service is always to be strived for, in most cases it is second in importance to consistency in the delivery of the product or service itself. Don't think so? Then think of the last time you (or anyone, for that matter) argued vehemently that McDonald's makes the perfect hamburger!

The difference between a true business owner and a self-employed person is that *the business owner strives to perfect the system that delivers the product or service*, while *the self-employed person obsesses over the product or service itself*. The business owner's objective, focuses on the system which motivates, trains and rewards employees, a system which, as the business grows, can be expanded with little or no additional involvement of the owner. The self-employed person, who pays little attention to the system, has his/her success rewarded with an ever-increasing workload to the point where the business model itself becomes unsustainable.

The lesson here: "*Perfection is the enemy of excellence*". Work more on your delivery system more than on your product or service, so that as the business grows, your system can absorb the expansion without absorbing you. In order to do this, you need to enroll *all* of your employees. And consider implementing a program I call, "*I caught you doing something right*". Train, motivate and reward employees and do it visibly. And often!

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