

**Notes from presentation by JIM HAINEY to  
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## CREATING A WIN-WIN WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

Preamble; So often I am called upon to speak at a conference or to a group of managers or employees re motivation, teambuilding, management etc. Sometimes it becomes very apparent in a very short time that the employees are simply in the wrong jobs and often in the wrong company. I often feel like asking "are you even in the right room?"

There is a long standing myth that providing you hire staff with the highest education you can afford - you can train them! I'm sure we've all heard of the "ambulance at the bottom of the cliff" scenario. Simply put you can prevent people jumping over the cliff or wait for them to hit the ground. Many companies have a fleet of ambulances on standby. Sometimes called the HR department. Bit like the story of the guy who crossed a Rottweiler with a St Bernard. After it attacked you it went for help.

We also know from experience if your product is the same or very similar to your competitors then your staff had better not be. Your ability to deliver the end product will depend on you and your staff.

I have identified five key areas that contribute to a winning workplace environment and I'd like to share them with you.

### **1. Picking and Keeping the right staff.**

In my 15 years running the largest privately owned personnel services company I observed that people were hired for the wrong jobs and for the wrong reasons. Sometimes we underestimate a role. A classic is the receptionist/switchboard operator. This is the key role in any company! Just phone your own switchboard one day and you'll see what I mean. How often have you entered an office and been left waiting, ignored totally or been amazed at the image of the person who is the front line of the company? It's not rocket science if you want someone who is well groomed, smiling and good with people then hire "someone who is well groomed, smiling and good with people".

I don't even like using the term "hiring" I much prefer "engaging". "Hiring" means you have short term usage of, whereas "engaging" means much more. In my book when you engage a person you have an obligation to love them unconditionally, trust them and support them 100% in their personal and corporate goals. Yes "personal" as well!

Whenever I ask a group to tell me what they look for in an employee they will give me words like;

Positive attitude, persistence, humour, appearance, ability to get along with others, courteous, respectful, happy, outgoing, talkative, good listener etc. All of which are personal traits not skill based and yet when we engage staff we focus so much on skills.

**SKILLS CAN BE TAUGHT ATTITUDES CANNOT BE TAUGHT.** Well not without extensive therapy or electric shock treatment which is illegal in most states. Or unless you hire your staff under the age of 11.

Look at each of your job categories and "distil" the key ingredients for success in each. Best way to do this is to recall the best people in that role and why. For a receptionist it would be a welcoming disposition and good grooming. You can teach the skill side of the position but get the welcoming disposition and grooming right first. Ever tried to tell someone they needed to improve their grooming?

Keeping good staff is of course the second part of this area. To replace a staff member will cost you anywhere from \$50,000.00 to \$100,00.00 so getting and keeping the right staff is key.

Best way to keep the right staff is to engage the right staff in the right roles. Try to avoid hiring people who are over qualified or underqualified but even more importantly avoid engaging people who will not be challenged and satisfied in the role you are about to engage them for.

## 2. Setting the standard.

People don't leave because standards are too high. They leave because standards are too low! Or that nobody really knows what the standards are. The first 6 weeks of employment is the "honeymoon" period. Thus named because they are being trained, settled in etc. But it is during this period that the new staff member is at their most vulnerable. This is where they realise that what they thought the company was isn't necessarily the way it is. They learn what is safe (stuff you can get away with) and unsafe (stuff you can't get away with) by observing who does what and who's still here. They learn this by observation. new staff are also at their most vulnerable at this time.

Busy managers have a tendency to assume that an employee "should know" how to do the job if they have had similar experience, or if they have been shown how to do it recently. Standards can and should be set for **every** task in every job. When a standard is not set – or one is in place but the manager avoids non-compliance, employees will set and follow their own standard. These "underground" performance rules might be close to what the company wants, but they could be radically different. People often do things differently when the manager is not looking.

This behaviour is influenced by peer pressure sometimes. For example: the group may discourage productivity that is higher than norm for the group, so the new employee has to modify their behaviour or be ostracized by the group. Behaviours may be influenced by how the job was done at their previous employer. It takes awhile for old habits to change to new ones.

They may be influenced by lack of knowledge, fear of looking stupid, difficulties encountered in attempting the task, lack of training and / or lack of experience with someone observing and supporting.

Identifying why a job is not being done at the desired level of productivity or quality is tough unless there are standards set in place to act as a benchmark. These standards need to be written and readily accessible by the employee.

Let's use the example of a receptionist. Many managers believe that a receptionist's job cannot be measured. In fact, any job can be measured. Every job should be measured or performance will be inconsistent and managing it will be too subjective to be effective. First identify the tasks. What do we want the receptionist to do?

Then identify the standards by which the job should be done to meet company expectations. Each task has its own list of standards or performance criteria. Behaviour can then be observed against these standards.

Set a measurement that identifies successful completion on that standard (do not measure "failure" rates). The ideal metrics for this standard is 100% on time on station. Performance acknowledgement and if applicable, bonuses or perks can be attached to these results. Different tasks can be observed, measured and acknowledged or rewarded each week or each month until consistent high level performance is in place.

## 3. Performance issues and how to handle them.

Performance issues can be broken into two areas; Behaviour and Results. A "behaviour" problem will always precede a "result" problem. Good managers know their staff well and can notice a change in behaviour. The change may not be work related but it needs to be addressed as it will eventually enter the work environment. Behaviour problems are more challenging to handle than result problems.

Let's start by identifying what a performance problem is. It is a deviation from the norm or the standard. Before you act on any apparent problem you need to ask yourself "is this important?" if it is then act, if it isn't but it's just annoying then don't act. The question is "what would happen if I did nothing?"

If the problem is important ask yourself has this person done it properly in the past? If they have then they need training to update their skills. If however they have never done it before but "should know how to do it" then it is a behaviour issue. Behaviour issues are caused by three factors;

Performance is punished. *Maybe if I perform I get more work thrust on me. Higher targets.*  
Non performance is rewarded. *I don't perform but still get bonuses.*  
Nobody cares about results. *It doesn't seem to matter either way.*

Not all problems with performance can be remedied by skill training in fact very few. Learn to tell the difference otherwise you'll spend a lot of money on training for very little return.

Whenever you're dealing with a performance issues be specific and factual in your interaction. If you cannot state the fact of the problem i.e. "for the past 5 days you have been late on three occasions by 10 minutes" then maybe don't have the meeting. If another staff member tells you about a problem but you weren't there to observe it then "don't have the meeting" unless the other staff member is prepared to be there. I do a lot of work in Australia and the USA where poor handling of performance issues can cost many millions of dollars.

Most performance meetings are poorly handled it's just that in Australia and New Zealand staff aren't as inclined to take legal action. But that will come in time! So get it right now.

Best time to plant an oak tree was 100 years ago. The next best time is NOW! Best time to give performance feedback to an employee is when it happened. Next best time is NOW. Don't wait for review periods. Way too late. Formal review periods and formal review assessments both performance and salary simply do not work and even more important is that they are feared by staff and act as a huge de-motivator in most instances. They should be avoided at all costs. Just like weekly meetings.

Stay close to your staff, love them, challenge and develop them. As they need help or show a lack of skill or behaviour give them feedback both positive and negative.

#### **4. Achieving 100% client satisfaction.**

When I ask an audience who has to win first out of; the client, the company and the employee. I invariably get; client/employee/company. In my opinion the correct and only answer is; employee/customer/company. But, but why? I hear you ask. Well if the employee is not winning in terms of job satisfaction, motivation etc then they are not able to deliver outstanding service to the client. Lousy service usually stems from a lousy attitude from an employee. This is why staff motivation is critical to the end product.

Having said that there is a formula which I believe sums up the satisfaction component of business. The formula is;

$$S = \frac{R}{E}$$

Where S is Satisfaction  
Where R is Reality  
Where E is Expectations

Listen to what your client is telling you. Learn to ask the right questions. Become a consultant. You don't need to know the answers - just the questions. Then meet and exceed their expectations. Don't think that the client will always have high expectations. Sometimes they will! They may even have unrealistic expectations. If they do you need to ask more conditions such as "why is that important to you?" "How would this look?" "when would you like this delivered?" By asking the right questions you can make sure their expectations are valid, genuine and realistic.

Try never to use the phrase "This is what we do" It sound reasonable but if you want to reach your full potential learn to give your clients what THEY want. Your role is to make sure they have their needs and expectations met and exceeded. This is where your experience and professionalism comes in.

Another factor in the delivery of outstanding service is tied into what is commonly known as the "silo effect". This is where different areas within the same company do not work well together but prefer to "do their own thing". As an example sales promise certain things and build certain expectations and accounts dig in their toes because maybe certain process was not correctly adhered to. Bottom line is that the client must never feel any disconnect. I was speaking with the Disney organisation at Anaheim in 2009. They have a unique approach. Behind closed doors the characters are staff. Once they enter the public area they become cast and are "on stage". It was a unique experience for me watching Snow White with Mothers and children "on stage" and then having her sitting in the front row of my presentation with the same negative and positive concerns as any other audience. Don't even ask me about Dopey?

## **5. Motivation and Discipline.**

Some managers are good at motivation while others excel at discipline. Very few seem to be able to balance the two. And yet they are two sides of the very same coin. And here's the really scary news! You cannot motivate anyone but yourself!

There are three recognised forms of motivation;

1. Motivation by fear. Works for a very short time and only as a last resort. Rarely successful!
2. Reward or incentive motivation. Works for a chosen few! Most hate this form of incentive and turn off. The same people win the prizes time after time. It's also anti teamwork based.
3. Self motivation. The only true motivation. The only one that can work.

Well then if you can't bully them with fear and you can't offer them rewards if they do what you want then what's the deal? Back on my soapbox. If you love them unconditionally, trust them and support them 100% in their personal and corporate goals then you will never have to "motivate" them "discipline" them or "train" them.

Find out what a person does uncommonly well and let them do it.

As a manager your function is to identify with your staff the goals they are committed to (hopefully they are the same as the company's) and remove any obstacles for them. You have more authority so you can do this and let them get on with moving forward. If you "motivate" them and don't remove the obstacles then they will simply hit the obstacles and hurt themselves. Better known as de-motivation.

So there you have it. My take on putting tis crazy puzzle together. Sorry it's not more complicated, more complex, more challenging for you. Bottom line is that if you engage the right people you will have the greatest company and the best stress free days of your life.

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