



3 Strategies to Revive Work Ethic in Your Business and Soar Profits

You want more business and higher profits. Your mind is racing with clever promotional schemes and innovative marketing ideas to attract new customers in the coming year.

Stop. Reboot your thinking. That's right. Hit your mental "Control – Alt – Delete" keys.

The surest way to grow your business in 2012 is to get your employees to work as hard as you do. If they are content to perform the minimum daily requirement, fly beneath your radar, and avoid getting fired until they get a better job, no amount you spend on marketing and branding will move you forward.

What you may actually need is a revival; a work ethic revival, that is.

To kick-start the revival in your organization, take these three action steps to increase employee engagement along your front lines, and you'll see a significant improvement to your bottom line.

1. Put Your Rule Book on a Diet – Think you need to create more policies to get your emerging workforce to work harder and stay longer? In reality, the opposite is true. Young workers aren't going to respond favorably to harsher penalties for when they show up late or violate your dress code; in fact, they'll rebel stronger against those policies they see as pointless.

That means you need to transition from creating more rules to establishing better rules. And better rules are always marked by clarity and relevance.

With a highlighter in hand, review your employee manual and mark only those rules, policies, and procedures that are foundational to the success of your operation. Everything that does not get highlighted should be eliminated. Every item that remains should be expressed in crystal-clear terms that even a 5th grader can understand. Simplicity and clarity trump jargon and corporate-speak.

Next, go back to page 1 and review the policies you have chosen to keep and, using the inquisitive mindset of a 5th grader, ask, 'why is this rule/procedure important to me?' Here's where relevance takes the wheel. Each and every item in your handbook should be written to include rationale of why it is essential to the success of your business, and, whenever possible, why it ultimately benefits employees.

If you demand more than occasional compliance to your company rules, keep your rulebook tight and light, and take steps to assure that each policy is seen from the employee's perspective as relevant and important to their success and the success of

your business. Although it's not easily doable, attempt to create the kind of employee handbook that a part time employee could memorize.

Getting your team to march in step toward the same goal can't be accomplished by creating a great handbook; it's a process that must be woven into your daily mentorship. One quick recital of your company policies during training will not cement them in the minds of your employees anymore than jumping into the air will enable you to float for an extended period of time.

2. Eliminate as you Accentuate - Nowhere is the culture of an organization in more full view of the customer than along the organization's frontline; the precious 189 inches of attitude that are projected between the nose of the employee and the nose of the customer. To achieve and maintain a healthy vibrant attitude throughout your organization's culture requires leaders to consistently eliminate the negative and to accentuate the positive.

Eliminate - Enter your workplace through the backdoor and see your operation from your employees' perspectives. Does your messaging read like it was sent down from the principal's office? There's a big difference between a sign on the employee entrance that says, "All Employees Must Park in the Back Lot" and one that says, "Our Customers Pay Our Wages, So Let's Save the Closest Parking for Them." Carefully edit the negative language and overtones out of employee e---mail, notices, and other forms of communication, and look for creative ways to present them in a more positive way.

Take steps to remove the drab and dreary signs, colors, and broken items that have a way of infesting back areas of workplaces. Managers often allow this to happen because "employees are the only ones exposed to it." You can't isolate your staff members from all the negativity that surrounds them, but you can take steps to remove some of the nastiness from your workplace.

Accentuate – Your employees need continual exposure to positive attitude in your workplace. This requires they be placed into situations where they can shadow your most enthusiastic and positive people and that they have minimum exposure to chronic complainers. Additionally, be on the lookout for those glimpses of the attitude you're trying to instill in your people, and be prepared to call attention to it as it happens.

Further, talk to your people about the good things that are happening throughout your business. In fact, spend as much time telling your frontline workers about these things as you do telling your potential investors. If you can't share positive news about your business, shine the light on something good that's taking place in your community, the nation, or the world. Make it your mission to be a purveyor of good tidings. Go out of your way to be the beacon of light when everything else they may be exposed to drags them down.



3. Learn What Your People Know... Every retailer and service provider from Schenectady to Shanghai appears to be fixated on capturing customer feedback, and many offer discounts and incentives to patrons who participate in online or call---in surveys. But if you really want to know what's going on in your business, ask the people who are manning your front lines and serving the customers you're attempting to WOW. If you really want to know what the biggest problems are in your organization, ask your employees. Want to know how to improve sales and service? Ask your employees. Need ideas to stay ahead of your competitors? Ask your employees.

A client of mine experienced a 22% monthly sales increase coupled with a 41% reduction in employee turnover the quarter she began enclosing a simple 3rd question survey in every employee's paycheck each week and providing a method for anonymous feedback. Employees were asked, "What do you like about working here?" "What would make you work harder and stay longer?" and "What ideas do you have for improving our products, service, and sales?"

Your people aren't your problem; they're the solution. Tap their brains and you'll see them throw their hearts into your business.

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