

## Management and Performance Associates – May-June-2016 The New Seven Habits of Highly Effective Leaders

“Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients.” ~Richard Branson

Unfortunately, many organizations have large numbers of unmotivated employees. The cost of this unengaged workforce is incredibly large. Even if these companies manage to have some profit (and many do not), the questions that remain in the air are: How much more could stockholders be making? What productivity is not being leveraged? What ideas are not being explored? How much energy is being wasted? In 2012, Gallup research found that worldwide only about 13 percent of employees were engaged with their work. The cost for companies is hundreds of billions of dollars each year in lost productivity.

Many managers blame their human resources policies, especially their compensation practices. Throwing money at the problem seemingly isn't the solution. First, budgets are limited. Second, there are more effective—and inexpensive—ways of handling the problem. Someone famous once said: “If a problem can be solved by writing a check, it's not a problem, it's an expense.”

MAPA classes help develop leaders by emphasizing the following 7 recommendations:

### **1. Start well from the beginning. Hire people who enjoy doing the job they are interviewing for.**

Paul Alofs, in his book *Passion Capital*, states “You will never go wrong if you hire for passion first, experience second, and credentials third.” If prospective employees aren't excited about the task they'll be performing, no amount of money will motivate them.

### **2. Engage in conversations with your employees about where and how they want to grow at the company.**

Most managers don't know what their employees want. They may be unaware that Peter is getting an

MBA or that Sarah is fluent in 3 additional languages. They have no clue that John is looking for a job in another city due to a family situation. That Mary, the “geek” who is brilliant writing code, secretly dreams of becoming a salesperson. Another way managers de-motivate employees—spending more money as well—is by promoting someone to a managerial position (“Isn't that what everybody wants?”) when the employee's passion is clearly connected to the technical job they perform.

Be careful not to generate false expectations during these conversations. Be honest and transparent about limitations to the process (their potential, the current operating scenario, opportunities, etc...). Our experience shows that showing genuine concern will get you positive points, and their engagement will go up.

### **3. Adapt your strategy to their motivational profile.**

Since motivation has to do with intrinsic motives (task or job related) whatever they find enjoyable should be optimized. A task perceived as boring by one staff member could be seen as exciting by another. Treating people equally seems fair, but actually it's very unfair, since their profiles and expectations are different. Talk to your people and find out what energizes them. Delegate a new task or project and look for their reaction. Are their eyes rolling or are they shining? Are they jumping on the new task or dragging their feet?

Part of this strategy is helping them redesign their job description. Is it possible to focus on the tasks that are perceived as enjoyable, and conversely delegate the ones which are not perceived the same? Many times this will not be practical, but keep an open mind. Sometimes it is.

### **4. Give them a sense of purpose and make them proud of their job.**

This applies especially to employees at the bottom of the pyramid (those who normally make less

money than others). They are normally disconnected from the company's vision and strategies. They are normally focusing on the task at hand, and many times do not see the connection between what they do and the impact on outcome. Many times, managers are to be blamed for that, as the connection is never made clear to the employees.

#### **5. Recognize your employees' contributions.**

We do not recommend recognizing your employees for doing their day-to-day tasks, when performance meets expectations (or when it's below expectations). That will only create a sense of entitlement. On the other hand, recognize their above expectations performance, their out of the box thinking, their creativity and innovation and their unexpected contributions. Any reward must be based upon delivery above expectations.

#### **6. Recognize their need for work/life balance.**

After working on a project over many weekends, and/or many late nights, appreciate their extra contributions and offer some time off. Employees become more engaged when they feel that their needs are being met and they perceive that they are being treated fairly.

#### **7. Use the appropriate management style as required by the situation.**

A major source of de-motivation for competent, smart, experienced and creative employees is when managers limit themselves by only telling their employees what to do – and how to do it. These managers don't engage staff in discussions. They don't explore staff's opinions and recommendations. Reserve your *tell* style for the situations that require compliance (policies and regulations) or for employees that are new to the task, to the job, or to the company.

We challenge you to apply the above recommendations. Then let us know if you see a difference in your staff's motivation to perform

their jobs. We think you'll find that retention of talent will also be improved over time.

**MAPA Consulting can help you and your team to develop these competencies.**

**See you next time. As always, we welcome your feedback.**