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ARTICLE OF INTEREST

GOOD EMPLOYEE VIBES

Good employees often are overlooked in the workplace by managers who are busy coaching new or problem workers

BY JOAN LLOYD

Like most things in life, individuals rarely seek advice when things are going well, so in this column, I'm going to focus on "good employees."

I would categorize good employees as those folks who show up every day, perform their jobs well and aren't high maintenance. They may, or may not, want to be supervisors or lead technicians. They may, or may not, want to find a bigger, better paying job. They are happy doing their job, and they enjoy the people they work with and the company they work for.

The biggest problem I see is that supervisors tend to take them for granted. Since they are no muss, no fuss types, the supervisor tends to spend more time coaching the new or problem employees.

However, if managers spent more time encouraging, recognizing and growing his or her good employees, the workplace would be a more satisfying, productive place. In addition, if good employees were appreciated for the full value they bring, there is strong evidence that suggests turnover would decrease overall.

Encourage Good Workers

So, how does a manager find the time to do all of this for the good performers?

Have regular one-on-one meetings with every member of your staff.

The standing agenda should contain at least two components: Questions about what is working and what isn't working. For example, here are some questions: What is working well? How are you getting these good results? Who is instrumental in helping you achieve these good results? Anything (or anyone) you're having trouble with? How are you handling that? What can I help you with?

Spread the positives around.

Once you know who is doing well and who is contributing to that end, get out of your cubicle and share the wealth. Go tell people how much you appreciate their contribution.

For example, how do you suppose an employee would feel when a director walks up to his desk and says, "I was talking with your supervisor today and she was telling me about how you handled the problem with ACME. I was very impressed."

Go into detail when giving positive feedback.

We are all taught to drill down for specifics when giving negative feedback, but we gloss over positive feedback. "Good job!" we'll exclaim, with a pat on the back. Why not go into detail about why you like what someone has done. "Jim, I really was pleased with your report this month. It was very detailed

about the problems you face on your new project and the steps you want to take to resolve them. I think this will be helpful to my boss when he reads it. He may understand a little better what we are facing in this project."

By painting a clear picture of what you like, you're encouraging more of the same type of behavior in the future.

At least once a year, ask the questions, "What do you want to learn next?" "What would you like to work on in the future?" "What skill(s) would you like to teach to others? Groom good employees for the future they want. Provide growth opportunities

The best way to keep a good employee is to help them prepare their skills for their next opportunity. It sounds counterintuitive, doesn't it? Good employees want to work for someone who understands that they will produce their best effort if they are working toward something they want.

For example, if you have a good employee who would like to be a supervisor in another area of the business, why not make a concerted effort to expose her to that part of the business, get her on some committees related to that department and introduce her to key people who can help her?

In addition, let her try out some supervisory skills by leading a project or acting as your back up while you're on vacation. When the person finally moves on, they will sing your praises as a good manager to work for, and other good employees will make a path to your door.

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