

How do you tell resentful workers their ideas are bad?

Maybe they actually have some worthwhile insights

By: RICK CONLOW

Q: I'm a veteran in my field and was recently promoted above my peers. Some of them are resentful. What can I do when I ask them for input and non of their ideas are good?

A: I applaud you for asking for your employees' input. But keep this in mind: whenever you ask employees for ideas, you must be prepared to objectively evaluate the ideas and try to implement some of them.

First, ask yourself if the ideas are really bad, and why. You may be judging their ideas by your own biases; often a normal reaction when you're first promoted to a position of authority. Chance are the employees' ideas contain come valuable insights.

Sincerely scrutinize their suggestions rather than discarding them without some homework. Ask your supervisor or another manager for opinions. Meet with the employees again to discuss the reasoning behind the ideas. Chance are you'll learn something.

Second, if there's absolutely no merit to their ideas, face them and noncritically tell them that you can't use their ideas at this time. You'll gain their respect by acknowledging their input, then honestly explaining your own reasoning. If you label their ideas as "dumb," you'll get no more suggestions in the future. And you'll be the loser.

BUILDING TEAMWORK

Q: How do I build teamwork with my employees?

A: Teamwork is one of those 90's buzzwords that's casually tossed around in today's organizations. "We're building a team that performs like Super Bowl champions;" or, "We're creating a team of World Series winners." The analogues are valid. You *can* build a team of winners who perform like Super Bowl champions in your organizations. But it takes a good manager/coach to do it.

MANAGER'S ADVISER

Here's how one manager developed a team. When his small Minneapolis-based manufacturing company landed a big contract, the manager needed employees to increase production to meet the deliver deadline. He couldn't pay them more, so he took the problem to the employees. Their solution: For each 5 percent increase in production, provide a day off with pay. Management agreed, and the employees increased production 25 percent. That's teamwork.

The response, however, didn't emerge out of a vacuum. The manager had already taken time to lay the groundwork that allowed the employees to respond as a team. Managers who develop teams know how to focus on two things: task and process.

Task is oriented toward work flow – the mechanics of work, how it gets done. To develop teamwork that improves work flow, seek employee ideas. After all,

employees are most closely involved with the work itself. Set goals based on employee input and clearly communicate them. Keep employees updated on results: positive or negative.

Process is oriented toward people and how they work together. To develop your team, pay particular attention to intangibles such as the employees' enthusiasm, attitudes and stress factors.

Also, don't forget: When your employees are working well together and getting work done, recognize and reward their efforts.

FOLLOWING THROUGH

Q. How do you get your employees to follow through and provide quality service?

A. Quite simply, your employees will follow through on quality service if you set the standard.

Management's reinforcement and commitment to quality is the most important factor in employee follow-through. Here are a few solid ways that some managers set examples for employees.

- A sales manager *reviews customer surveys* at every meeting
- A company president personally handles *customer complaints*.
- A bank manager holds *monthly training* for employees.

Remember, quality is process. These managers are taking solid steps to improve quality by following through with these steps on a continuing basis.

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Rick Conlow, CEO/Senior Partner, and Doug Watsabaugh, COO/Senior Partner have helped companies, governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations achieve record-breaking results for more than 20 years as performance improvement experts. Their clients' achievements include double digit improvements in repeat and referral business, triple digit increases in sales, more than 50% reduction in customer complaints, 34 quality and service awards and domination in their respective markets. Rick and Doug are popular motivators and speakers, inspiring audiences with their engaging down-to-earth but down-to-business approach. They have authored more than a dozen books, including *SuperSTAR Customer Service*. This year they will publish the *SuperSTAR Leadership Model*.

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