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Do You Inspire or Incinerate?

By Robert E. Cannon

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Throughout my career, I have asked managers what they look for in hiring new employees. The single most sought after characteristic is a positive attitude. Knowledge can be learned but a positive attitude cannot be taught and is recognized as being critical for success. Yet, if attitude is so important, why do we do so much to destroy it? (I use we, because as a manager, I was guilty of having done some of the very things I have outlined below.) The following are some things I have learned that will enhance or destroy a positive attitude.

Demeanor. Early on in my career in Sales Management, it became apparent to me that I could single-handedly affect the attitude of the entire office just by my demeanor when I was visible to the staff. If I smiled, they would smile and have a positive attitude. My smile indicated to them that things were going well with customers, with sales and in turn with revenues and the safety of their jobs. If, on the other hand, I scowled at them, they would hang their heads and generally be down at the mouth. My negative attitude indicated to them that things weren't going well and they began to worry. The attitude of the entire office could be turned on or off depending upon whether I came to work with a smile or not.

I have also learned that demeanor is more than just smiling, it is an outward expression of your own attitude. Whether we realize it or not, we lead by example. If you are excited about a project, the people around you will be excited too. It's contagious. If you have a strong work ethic, they will try to emulate you. If you are conscientious, they will be too.

Once upon a time in an open and friendly office, I watched a new supervisor who was very cynical. Sadly, it wasn't long until the entire open and friendly office turned cynical as well and cooperation dropped to a very low level. It was all the result of the attitude of the supervisor.

Language. I think too many of us have confused our roles as managers with the function of problem solving. Much of what managers do is viewed as problem solving. The word "problem" by itself is a downer let alone what it represents. Seeking out causes of problems implies blame and raises defenses. No one was ever uplifted by the words, "We have a problem." The negative language is compounded by a process that uses phrases like "cause analysis," "estimate consequences," "evaluate tradeoffs," "recognize uncertainty" and "estimate risk tolerance."

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Most managers I have met spend more time and effort finding fault and criticizing employees than they do finding the things they are doing right and praising them.

Problem based language does not make any of us feel like celebrating. Just think about how they affect the people around you. How much better would it be if we could develop a positive language that changed the organization from one with problems to one with solutions. Using language that included words like: opportunity, options, praise, ideal and others would go a long way to maintaining or enhancing positive attitudes.

Involvement. In this era of downsized, everybody do more, how many of you have managed by declaration or edict? When everyone is wearing multiple hats and performing multiple functions, it just seems easier to make a decision and delegate the implementation wherever possible. When we manage by declaration or edict, we are generally reducing the speed of the implementation, reducing

the likelihood of success and sapping the positive attitude of the people involved. People's attitudes soar when they are involved in the decision-making process and understand fully the why of doing something. The success and the speed of success of any implementation are directly related to the involvement of the implementers in the decision process. Not only does involving the people in the decision enhance attitudes, but also they are enhanced again when the decision is successfully implemented and they were a part of it.

Recognition. All too frequently managers take the good things in stride as if they deserved success rather than appreciating each and every step along the way. These are the same people who are too busy to stop and say thank you for a job well done. Sadly, their actions send a message to all around them that what ever they did to help achieve this success was not as important as the "problem" they are addressing now. Lighten up. If you really want to foster a positive attitude, "Thank you" is the least you should do.

If you really want to foster a positive attitude and enhance productivity, then recognize people and their talents even before you involve them in an assignment. People tend to rise to your expectations. If you don't have any expectations of they are low, the output you get will probably match your expectation. Recognition at the conclusion of a successful project is equally important. People love success and they love recognition for their efforts. They want to savor it and the more success and recognition they get, the more they want. Why would any manager in his right mind not want to develop the same desire in his employees? Celebrate every success and foster the right attitude for the next success. Most managers hire for positive attitude in an effort to develop an outstanding performer and enhance the success of their endeavor. Very few, however, are willing to devote the time and effort it takes to really follow through in a positive way to foster positive attitudes and create the right environment for success. If results are important and attitude is important, then we need to take the time to do it right.

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Byline

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Do You Inspire or Incinerate?

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Robert E. Cannon, successful business executive, left the corporate world in 2001 to start Cannon Advantage; a firm specializing in helping visionary leaders and business decision-makers who want to enhance the competitive advantage of their organizations.

Motivational Posters... A Source Of Inspiration?

By Willie Jones

What Inspires You? What motivates you to get up in the morning? Are you one of those people who have a burning desire to achieve something or are you drifting along doing your daily routine? This is something you may not have put much attention on or even any at all but, if you look closely, you may find that there may have been one or more people who have inspired you in your life.

Any person who has been successful at something will tell you something like, my grandma always said...or my dad always gave me the best advice, or someone once said to me...! Get the picture?

Words can be very powerful in influencing our lives. A certain phrase can suddenly just hit you and BAM; a sudden realization can change the direction you're going in! The reaction one has to these realizations varies tremendously.

You may find that a certain saying moves you while Joe next store doesn't feel moved by it at all.

There are many areas of life that we look for inspiration or motivation; love and relationships, business, sales, and even in times of trouble such as war and natural disasters.

If you were in the military, you might find something like this quote, as seen on a motivational print, to be something that inspires you; "Bravery-Soldier...It takes an extraordinary person to face danger and maintain composure".

A mother may find this inspirational, "Direction-Family...There are two important things we can give our children. One of them is roots, and the other is wings"

Another is "Leadership-Fisherman...A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way".

These are all quotes that are often seen on motivational prints in offices and homes, but individuals we know or meet in our daily lives can also inspire us.

The visual of the poster or print along with an inspirational saying underneath can be a great tool to inspire your self and others and serve as a reminder of the path you are on.

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Remember though that an inspiration or motivation from others is only as good as what we ourselves contribute to it. The real motivation comes from within.

Hang them up at work or at home and enjoy!

Willie Jones is a freelance writer, researcher, floral designer, and artist. "Make sure you enroll in the free motivational poster drawing at

http://www.artinspires.com/display_motivational.asp/

. All winners

receive a free framed print."

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