



Encouraging Top Performance

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How do you get high performance out of people? An “old school” approach might be to beat it out of them in a reign of terror. I know a grocery store chain that when one of the owners or corporate management visits the store knees quake and everyone is on pins and needles. They know that if anything is wrong, heads will roll. It’s only the daily efforts and the personalities of individual store managers that make it bearable for employees.

Another approach to maximizing employee performance is through more enlightened leadership. Here are seven essential steps to encouraging and rewarding people to achieve high performance.

1. ***Set clear standards and goals.*** Establish the behaviors that are desired and appropriate and the goals to be rewarded.
2. ***Expect the best.*** If standards and expectations are set high, yet achievable, people will strive to meet that expectation. If you set expectations low, people will meet that level of performance too. As a leader, it’s your choice.
3. ***Pay attention.*** Catch people doing things right and reward them for it immediately. People want attention and like being told exactly what they’re doing well. The behaviors you pay attention to and reward you’ll get more of.
4. ***Personalize the recognition and rewards.*** Different things are important to different people, and that changes as we move through life. Make your rewards meaningful to each individual receiving them. To know, - - ask.
5. ***Tell the story of success.*** Communicate good examples by turning them into good stories. Share these stories with other employees and off-farm individuals. People like hearing good stories about themselves.
6. ***Celebrate.*** Recognize and reward people publicly. Host pizza ordered in, or lunch or dinner at a local restaurant and invite agri-service people to be there and hear you boast about your employees. Celebrate even small team successes or goal accomplishments in some way.
7. ***Set the example.*** Walk the talk. Make recognition part of your job, don’t delegate it to someone else. Or worst, don’t just assume people know their efforts are appreciated. If you’re positive, upbeat and appreciative other will be as well.

Managing people isn’t easy, but the good news is most people don’t expect perfection from their manager. If you aren’t already doing all seven steps, don’t think you need to start doing them all tomorrow. Start by making a conscious effort to focus and work on just one or two of them. It will make a positive difference.