

The YEBDC Small Business Information Column

by Sue Gingerich, Business Advisor

"Getting the Most From Employees"

Do you ever have trouble getting the most out of your employees? They do their job, but you really wish they would see those little extra things that would make things run just a bit more smoothly or increase the sales just that little bit more. Human nature is, when we are told what to do, we do it. And that's it! The secret is try to make it their idea, not yours, then it's more motivating!

There is, of course, a time and a place to tell employees what to do and how to do it. When an employee is new or untrained then you may need to give them step by step instructions. But as employees learn their jobs, they will begin to have ideas about how to do it better or more efficiently. If you take the time to listen to their ideas, this will help them to stay motivated. The next step in motivating is to actually implement some of their ideas.

Once an employee has worked with you for a period of time, you should be able to step back a bit. Loosen the reins. Give them a bit more freedom. When it comes to new tasks you may ask them how they would handle it. If their idea is just as workable as the way you would have suggested let them try their method. By allowing them to do it their own way you have allowed them to make their own mistakes. They will learn much more from this method, then from you telling them exactly how and what to do. They will appreciate the fact that you had another method, yet allowed them to try theirs. Even if their method doesn't work, they will have gained more respect for you, because you allowed them to fail or succeed on their own merits. Next time they may be more willing to listen to your instructions. If their idea did succeed then nothing is lost, and much is gained. Your employees will be even more enthused about bringing more new ideas to work and will most likely like their work more and like working for you even more!

Some other tips for motivating employees:

1. Monthly meetings where the employees set the agenda
2. Suggestion boxes or books
3. Regular feedback from bosses, positive and negative (and not just at appraisal time)
4. Incentive programs, such as:
 - o bonuses for exceeding regular work quotas
 - o reimbursement for relevant courses taken outside of work hours
5. Pay them what they are worth
6. Always keep your promises to employees
7. Give their position a job title
8. Take time to honestly listen to your employees

Imagine a place where employees get to share ideas and implement them. Now they're excited to come to work and do the work! Of course you still must maintain the control. You need to know who is doing what and when. But allowing your employees the freedom to bring a bit of themselves into the job, will go miles to increase their love of their job. At the same time allowing you to get the most from your employees.

If you have a small business and have a question or problem that you think The YEBDC could help you with please call or write to: The Yellowhead East Business Development Corporation,

Box 249, Sangudo, Alberta, T0E 2A0
1-800-556-0328 or 1-780-785-2900, e mail: yebdc@yebdc.ab.ca, or access our Website at:
www.yebdc.ab.ca

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