

Helping Clients Achieve Sustainable Competitive Advantage
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How Is Your Strategy? Time Out For Thinking

If you find you're too busy to do the strategic planning your company needs, you might want to listen to Neal Patterson, chairman and CEO of Kansas City, MO -based Cerner Corp. It was when Cerner was doubling revenues about every 45 weeks that Patterson said, "Whoa, I need to preserve some time to think."

He now schedules a weekly two-hour session to "talk to himself." He prefers to do it early in the morning - "when my mind is uncluttered" - and away from the office, so he won't be interrupted.

This isn't fill I work between appointments," Patterson says, "yet that's how too many executives treat it. That can get a company in trouble."

The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.

— William James

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The Top 10 Ways to Empower Your Employees

The word empower is often over-used. Many employers talk about empowering their employees but often employees feel disempowered. Here's a list of the top 10 things you can do that will really empower your employees, according to employees, not employers!

1. Allow employees to actively participate in team and company goals.

Look for every opportunity to include employees at every level of the organization, in being active participants. Employees often report getting one-way directives instead.

2. Allow employees to suggest better ways of getting their jobs done.

Ask for employee suggestions for other ways of getting the task or project accomplished. Listen and be willing to really hear the employees' comments. Employees often report that they have no input and are told exactly how to perform their jobs, leaving no creativity.

3. Provide positive reinforcement.

Always listen and acknowledge your employees. Employees often report that their decisions and actions are second-guessed and that most, if not all, feedback given is negative.

4. Clearly delegate responsibility and give the employees authority along with the responsibility.

Do you give inconsistent messages? Do you ask the employee to handle a problem or project and then give them negative feedback or give them an assignment and then say "never-mind?" Employees often report that they are given tasks and then told they did it wrong.

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ONE MINUTE IDEAS

Employees Just Want To Have Fun

An extensive, company-sponsored recreation and social program can be a boost to moral - but it can also be a fiscal and managerial nightmare to the CEO who has to administer it. Jack Stack, CEO of Springfield Remanufacturing Center Corp., in Springfield, MO., was so intent on fostering healthy relations with his 450 employees that he began feeling more like a camp director with each passing athletic season. His solution? Set a budget, and then let your employees divvy it up themselves.

"It's really hard to please everybody," says Stack. "You don't know how to draw the line and be fair at the same time." So he established a recreation committee for each of his plants. Eight employees, elected annually, receive a budget of \$5,000 with which to fund company softball and volleyball teams, fishing tournaments, and a company picnic. "It gets rid of the little headaches for managers," Stack says, "and it gives employees a taste of what it's like to be a manager."



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5. Be clear in your communication.

When you express goals or explain projects, be sure the employees really understand what you are asking for. Employees often report that the goals are unclear and that they are not sure what they are being asked to do.

6. Show you have trust in your employees.

Allow them to make mistakes as a form of learning. Show that it is really ok to make mistakes. Let them know you really support their decisions. Employees often report that someone is always looking over their shoulder to make sure they do things right.

7. Listen. Listen. Listen.

Do you do most of the talking? Employees often report that conversations are one way, comprised mostly of their ideas being criticized. They don't feel they are heard.

8. Be interested in the employees' career development.

Meet with employees and discover their goals and their wants. Employees often report that their goals are not viewed as important in the organization.

9. Let the employees help you achieve success.

Are you doing it all yourself? Employees often report that their managers do all the tasks and they have no way to make contributions outside their job descriptions. Look for opportunities to delegate and enhance the employees' career development at the same time.

10. Be a coach.

The best way to empower employees is not to manage them. Coach them to success. This is a process of developing their skills and providing them specific feedback to meet high standards. Employees often report feeling like children rather than being on the same team with their bosses. Be their coach and lead the team to success!

Submitted by Terri Levine, Professional and Personal Coach, Copyright 1997-2004, e-mail at: terri@comprehensivecoaching.com, by Coach U

The Lighter Side

Teacher: What is the chemical formula for water?

Sarah: H I J K L M N O!!

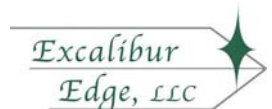
Teacher: What are you talking about?

Sarah: Yesterday you said it's H to O!



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