

Motivating Your Team is Everything

By Judith Filek—President
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Success in today's pressure-cooker workplace depends on high functioning teams. The question that befuddles many managers and supervisors today is how to motivate their inside sales or customer service teams to exceed customer expectations. Three key elements seem to define motivated teams.

- 1. Managers and supervisors interact frequently.** Years ago, Tom Peters, the well-known author and speaker, suggested that managers manage best by walking around. While most people agree that getting to know their teams is important, the reality is managers and supervisors are swamped with paperwork and the tasks associated with their jobs. They spend very little "face" time with their team, often relying on e-mail to explain new targets or procedures.

Our suggestion is that managers should pencil floor time into their everyday work schedule. They should also pencil in rotating lunches with each staff member so that they catch up on what is going on with the person, both on the job and off the job. When walking up and down the aisles, they should stop and ask, "How it is going? What's new with kids?" They should also offer advice when solicited or appropriate. When they hear something terrific, they should publicly applaud that person. Conversely, if they need to offer a correction, they should do it privately so as to protect the person's self-esteem. When people feel you care about them and know them, they inevitably work harder and are more committed both to you and the organization.

- 2. Teams are empowered to make everyday decisions.** Phone reps do not have to place the caller on hold and/ or transfer the call to a supervisor for authorization. Each rep can make decisions about waiving fees or replacing parts. By having decision-making powers, reps take full responsibility for retaining

the customer and enhancing the relationship the caller has with the company. Customers appreciate it because their issues are more quickly resolved.

With decision-making authority, reps, not only feel less stressed, but they also feel that the company has confidence in them. They feel more a part of the organization as a whole and more motivated to achieve corporate goals.

- 3. Incentives are tied to the team as a whole.** In most organizations, if the individual performs well, the person will receive some sort of reward. Often, the incentive program creates a competitive atmosphere between employees. Rather than helping each other, team members leave the individual floundering so as not to jeopardize their own performance.

Studies show that when incentives are tied to the joint performance of the entire team, the team self-monitors low performing members. They pick up the slack when another member falls behind. They motivate each other. Federal Express noticed that when they tied incentives to the evaluation of the entire team, productivity went up 40%. The team became motivated to their department's success, rather than their own.

Peter Drucker said productivity is the true competitive advantage. When teams are motivated by:

- Consistent and frequent interaction from their managers
- Decision making ability
- Joint performance evaluations

phone reps will not only be more motivated, the company as a whole will be more productive and profitable. In today's world, there is less margin for error, more likelihood for mistakes and a higher price to pay for errors. Well orchestrated teams are essential.

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