

## Improving Organizational Effectiveness

It is a safe assumption that every organization's leadership has asked its leadership community the following questions in the past year, "Are we functioning at the highest level possible?" And "What can we do to move our organization to a higher level?" Our economic conditions have forced every organization to re-evaluate our systems, structure, and people as we try to accomplish more with less. By definition, and there are certainly many interpretations of organizational effectiveness, it is simply about doing everything you know to do and do it well. While many models exist, the premises of management have not changed - planning, organizing, leadership, direction and controlling. This article focuses on thought and recommendation for evaluation of and implementation of practices for improving organizational effectiveness. Here are 9 managerial practices to be considered:

1. Be realistic in setting position specifications and in hiring into the firm. In developing position specifications, the manager should clearly define responsibilities and requirements in terms of education, experience and personal abilities. In initial selection, the manager should emphasize personal abilities and be prepared to supplement education and experience on the job.

2. Set high but attainable standards of performance and relate the career objectives of the individual as closely as possible to the performance objectives of the position and the company. The best managed companies have very high standards of performance that are met by a majority of its employees. "Meeting Requirements" in such a company is an achievement in itself and the appraisal system is not skewed to rate the majority "above requirements" or "outstanding." In these organizations, the career needs of the individual are recognized as the reciprocal of the objectives of the company.

3. Communicate these objectives and provide appropriate feedback to the indi-



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vidual frequently, clearly, and with sincere interest in the individual's progress. In our society, a powerful word is "caring." If "you" do not, "they" know. If you do, they know that, too. Individuals respect direct, honest and tough feedback...negative as well as positive. The message is, "I can improve." The individual improves and the company benefits. Keep in mind that the "no surprises" principle applies downward as well as upward. Also, it needs to be mentioned that wide-spread, consistent "above requirements" ratings create expectations that most organizations cannot meet because of the inherent limitations of the pyramid structure and can cause resentment among truly superior performers when they perceive a lack of performance differentiation.

4. Base rewards to the extent possible on performance, simultaneously rewarding the willingness to re-train and relocate, to assume risk, and to seek challenge and responsibility without unduly penalizing failure. This may be the manager's greatest challenge. The culture must support the practices, the reward system must enable them, but the manager must execute them. More study and support needs to be focused on helping the manager meet this challenge.

5. Understand the requirements of his or her mission and the concepts of job design. When this occurs, the manager can be creative in matching requirements and concepts to the career needs to subordinates. To maintain challenge and commitment, the manager can employ many approaches; lateral transfers, partial or full exchanges of duties, downward transfers (demotions), gradual retirement transitions, and other techniques to enrich the individual's career and to enable long-term company contributions.

6. Encourage continual learning of professional/technical, interpersonal, and managerial skills to respond to the changing corporate and individual needs and environments. The fact that the only

constant is change and that learning should be a life-long process, must be communicated to and understood by the individual. A mindset emphasizing willingness to change, improve and grow, and an alertness to opportunities to effect his change are the marks of a valued and satisfied employee.

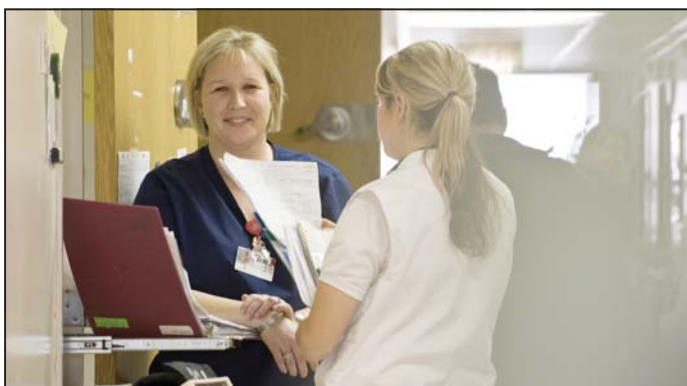
7. Encourage a balanced life on the part of each subordinate; special organizational needs should be addressed directly by using the monetary and human resources of the organization. Over the long-term, employees contribute more to the organization when they have a good balance among career, family, and other interests. A manager enhances this long-term contribution by not consistently making "excessive" demands on individuals, and by encouraging participation in professional, civic, charitable, and religious activities.

8. Become knowledgeable and familiar with the concepts of career planning and the application of these concepts for both subordinates and for them self. Nobody expects the manager to be a professional career counselor, but each subordinate to some extent expects the manager to counsel them on their career. The manager meets this expectation by developing sensitivity to career issues and by being perceived as being on top of their own career.

Most managers spend considerable time planning, organizing and controlling capital, equipment and people to achieve organizational goals. Most managers spend very little time thinking about either their own or their subordinates' careers. This passivity needs to be replaced by a proactive career planning effort that matches individual career goals with organizational goals. This is a hallmark of a successfully managed company.

9. Be willing to recognize the "terminal" problem and take the necessary action. The only thing as bad as terminating someone too quickly is waiting too long. There are times when the best solution for the organization is to terminate. When that is the case, it is in the interest of the individual to get on with their career; so it is to the individual's benefit to be separated as soon as possible. The organization benefits by bringing in someone with a long-term perspective and by a timely and orderly exit and replacement process.

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