

The McKenzie Mailer

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Minimize Employee Issues by Creating a Positive Work Environment

All companies have to deal with issues regarding their employees. It is no secret that employees who feel a part of their organization and feel as though they are making contributions to the growth and success of the company will give the extra effort. This, in turn, results in a win-win situation. In this environment, employees feel more important, enjoy their work and feel better about the contributions they are making to the organization. Turnover in these companies is lower. Employees are more energized. Best of all, the employers also win because profits improve.

A prime example of this is Southwest Airlines. While other airlines are wallowing in their troubles, Southwest has not laid off a single person in the last six months. In fact, they recently announced that they will be hiring thousands of new employees. Over time, Southwest has developed a culture based on its mission statement.

“The mission of Southwest Airlines is dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and Company Spirit.”

This culture was not built overnight. It took a long time to develop and take hold. The employees of Southwest embrace this mission in their daily work activities.

To establish this type of work environment, the employer must start with the fundamentals. Develop and communicate your mission and values statements as well as your business goals and objectives. The next step is to develop policies, procedures and standards of performance that complement your mission, values and goals. Set a plan on where you want to be in three years and map out what has to be done to get there. Share this plan with your employees. This gives employees a sense of security as well as an idea of their own opportunities for growth. The worst thing a business executive can do is spend months working on a business or strategic plan and not share it with the employees. Don't fall into the **SPOTS** trap. It means **Strategic Plan On Top Shelf** where no one ever looks at it again. It just sits there idly and collects dust.

Have the employees and their managers jointly determine standards of performance that are in concert with the goals of the company. Communicate often. Things to communicate include: revenue, profits, new clients, lost clients – and why they were lost. Employees should get feedback on meeting performance standards. These standards should be reviewed for relevancy often. Celebrate success together. Increased revenues are accomplished by all of the employees not just the sales staff.

Turn your poor performers into achievers or move them out of the organization. This is another way to avoid employee issues. Weed out the negativity. Negativity breeds contempt. Give the naysayer and slacker a chance to improve. Be honest about the poor performance or negative behavior and tell them it has to stop. Advise them of the consequences of not complying. Document the conversation and have the employee sign it.

If poor performers are allowed to continue at a low level of output, your top performers will be negatively affected by it. Have you ever heard anyone say, “Why am I working so hard while they (management) let him sit around and do nothing all day?” The good performer will either lower his or her output or get disgusted and find another job. Another penalty to the high achievers is they get all of the special projects and most of the overtime because management knows that the slackers will not get the job done. In this case, good performance is punished.

Setting proper guidelines and performance standards go a long way to ensure the effectiveness of your company. Employment laws, or lack of knowledge of them, often paralyze the business owner into inaction. Don't let this happen in your work area. Knowledge is power and employers should know the rules.

The silver lining of employment laws is that it forces managers to be more effective in their dealings with employees. Knowledge is power – find out more. When an employee fails



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to meet minimum work standards, there is no need to continue paying them for mediocre work performance.