

Raising Morale

Six ways to create a positive work environment

Business leaders, employees and unions often talk about morale in the workplace.

Unfortunately, this subject usually becomes a hot topic when someone thinks morale has deteriorated or is not up to par. Have you noticed that you seldom hear about workplace morale when it's considered to be good?

People often speak about raising morale as if you could apply some magical ointment to a workplace. Business leaders and well meaning human resource departments will suggest special initiatives, programs or events intended to improve the situation. These programs are usually unsuccessful and unsustainable.

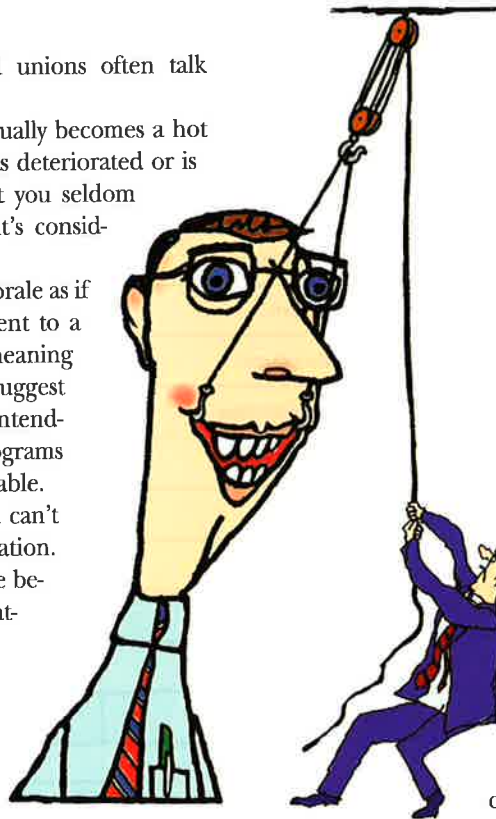
Morale is a lot like motivation: you can't just give it to employees or an organization. Morale is the result of ongoing positive behaviours that are routinely demonstrated. So while some people believe that paying higher wages or benefits will somehow improve morale, typically, this does not address the underlying issues. It only creates a higher paid workforce with poor morale.

Following are six basic factors that can have a major impact on morale in a workplace:

1. **A Thriving and Successful Organization.** The first step towards raising morale is to build and maintain a thriving and successful business. Organizations that focus on continuous improvement are on the right track. This is not to say that organizations facing challenges are doomed to poor morale; in the right circumstances, and with appropriate leadership, an organization and its employees can rally around adversity.

2. **Personal Recognition Pays.** A simple and genuine "Thank You" goes a long way to improve employee morale. Employees will go an extra kilometre and beyond for leaders or co-workers who show sincere thanks and appreciation for their efforts. In workplaces with low morale employees will frequently tell you that they seldom, if ever, receive a word of thanks from their supervisor.

3. **Positive Organizational Communication.** Employees can accept unpleasant or bad news. If you ask, they will very likely have positive suggestions and ideas about what can be done to improve a difficult situation. The key is to



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keep employees informed of the good and bad news that is part of everyday life in most workplaces.

4. **Properly Addressed Employee Concerns.** Occasionally, workplace problems are left unresolved. Problems with equipment, processes, facilities or tools that are left uncorrected send a strong negative message to employees. Even worse, problems relating to basics like safety, human rights and respect in the workplace that are left unresolved will eventually multiply and decimate workplace morale. It is crucial to properly address employee concerns as quickly and effectively as possible.

5. **A Positive Visual Workplace.** A quick glance around can tell you a lot. When you see graffiti, vandalism, clutter, poorly

maintained lunchrooms or messy parking lots, it speaks volumes about the leadership and the employees. Such a workplace drains morale. Clean, comfortable, inviting environments will help instill happiness.

6. **Even, Fair Employee Workloads.** Employees come to work every day to succeed. When they are faced with an overwhelming workload day after day they become disengaged. I am not referring to a busy day or a short busy period. Rather, I'm referring to situations where the workload is routinely overwhelming. Worse yet is a situation in which the workload is not reasonably allocated and some people are over busy while others seem to have little to do. Employees will react negatively in such situations.

The good news is that the company's leadership can address the six points above with little or no cost. Good morale and effective leadership go hand in hand. **CCE**

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