

To get what YOU want, meet your employees' needs



By
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What do people want most out of life?

Nearly 20 years ago the Rand Corporation was asked by the U.S. government to find out. They did a widely-publicized study of several years' duration on "quality of life." Basically, they simply asked people what was most important to them in life.

What Rand learned about us seems to have held true in the years since. Other studies have confirmed that most of what people said they needed for a satisfying life then has remained constant. It often has been noted that monetary reward per se is never high on such lists.

People told the Rand researchers they wanted:

- More control over their own lives and the destinies of their families.
- The opportunity to learn and develop throughout their lives.
- Work roles that are meaningful.
- The chance to participate in life, not merely observe it.
- Challenges.
- The opportunity to work with open, happy, trusting people.
- Protection against being unwillingly jeopardized.

Does it surprise you to find out that you, as a manager, have it within your power to fulfill most of those needs for the people who work in your organization?

By seeing that as many as possible of those wishes are granted, a manager can do his/her organization a tremendous favor. If you will look about you, you'll prob-

ably find that employees who are already getting these seven needs fulfilled are of great value to you and your operation.

Let's take a look at fulfillment possibilities.

The matter of giving up control and listening to new ideas is tough for old-style, highly structured managers. But some elegant success stories in U.S. industry—Hewlett Packard comes to mind—have resulted from sharing power and being open to change.

The organization that constantly helps its people to keep abreast of new information—updating them, training them, challenging them to be all they can be—is the business with a future.

Helping an employee to see the big picture and where he or she fits into it is a start toward fulfilling the need we have to feel that our roles are meaningful. Explaining the significance of a job, no matter how small, tells your employees that they are making a contribution toward a greater goal.

We all want to participate in life. How often have you heard a child say, "Let ME do it!" Or how frequently have you seen a bunch of adult men eager to take a turn at untangling a fishing line? "Let ME try it!" Look for that employee who's eager for a turn and don't let his/her fire die down from lack of opportunity.

Challenges are the life's blood of the workplace. Part of a leader's role is to provide them.

Working with others who are happy in their work and can be trusted may be the most satisfying aspect of the workplace for many people-oriented employees. And although job security cannot be a given in today's economy, the sensitive manager knows that a constant feeling of jeopardy impairs abilities and destroys productivity. Giving your employees the support they need when change is necessary will help them through volatile times.

In large part, by meeting your employees' needs, you'll most likely meet yours.

This audit tests attitude at top

The organizational climate required for improving productivity is created by upper management, according to consultant David Bain.

Bain recommends doing the following audit to identify the direction set by management:

Questions To Answer

1. Is managerial focus more on "how" things will be done, or "whether" things will be done?

A B

2. Is "empathy" or "excellence" stressed more by managers?

- | | |
|------------|---------|
| Excellence | Empathy |
|------------|---------|
3. Which is the most common response to well-prepared and complete proposals aimed at improving operations: a decision ("yes" or "no") or repeated requests for "further analysis"?

- | | |
|----------|------------------|
| Decision | Further analysis |
|----------|------------------|
4. Do all managers have specific performance-related goals, and are they held responsible for achieving them?

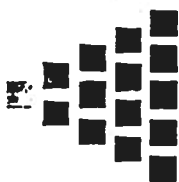
- | | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
5. Within the past year, has any employee been penalized financially because of low productivity?

- | | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
6. Are managers held strictly responsible for cost control and budget achievement?

- | | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
7. Do employees ever participate at any level in planning or decision-making?

- | | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
- The fewer the responses in column B, the better is the organization's climate for improving productivity.

SOURCENOTE: David Bain, *The Productivity Prescription: The Manager's Guide to Improving Productivity and Profits*, McGraw-Hill, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020, 1982, \$19.95.



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Five Principal Reasons People Change Jobs

1. It doesn't feel good around here. This is a corporate culture issue in most cases. Workers are also concerned with the company's reputation; the physical conditions of comfort, convenience, and safety, and the clarity of mission.
2. They wouldn't miss me if I were gone. Even though leaders do value employees, they don't tell them often enough. If people don't feel important, they're not motivated to stay. No one wants to be a commodity, easily replaced by someone off the street. If they're no more valued than being thought of as expendable, they'll leave for a position where they're appreciated.
3. I don't get the support I need to get my job done. Contrary to opinions heard all-too-often from management, people really do want to do a good job. When they're frustrated by too many rules, by red tape, or by incompetent supervisors or co-workers, they're looking for other opportunities.
4. There's no opportunity for advancement. No, we're not talking about promotions, although a number of deserving people would like to move up. The issue here is learning. People want to learn, to sharpen their skills and pick-up new ones. They want to improve their capacity to perform a wide variety of jobs. Call it career security. The desire here is for training and development. If workers can't find the growth opportunities with one company, they'll go to another employer where they can learn.
5. Compensation is the last reason people most leave. That's a brash statement, but it's true. Workers want fair compensation, but the first four aspects have to be present. If they're not strong, but money's high, you'll hear people say "you can't pay me enough to stay here." Even with these values in place, there are a lot of employees who feel they can better themselves just by chasing more income.

This excerpt was taken from Roger Herman's best selling book, *Keeping Good People* (Oakhill Press, 1997). Roger Herman is a Strategic Business Futurist and author with a consulting and speaking practice based in Greensboro, NC. For more information refer to The Herman Group website at www.herman.net or call 336/282-9370.

