



Employee Engagement In Tough Economic Times

By Ann Kelleher, Integrity Staffing, January 2009

With the litany of gloomy information coming at them about the down economy, it can be difficult to keep employees fully engaged. Yet, experts agree it has never been more important. You must have your employees functioning at their very best to help pull the organization through to a brighter day.

Here are five suggestions that can be effective in helping people stay energized, focused and committed.

1. Communicate Frequently

Build trust with your employees by communicating in a straight-forward fashion about any challenges your organization faces today. Employees can see what is happening and they are worried about job security and finances. They are looking for candid, honest information from leadership about the challenges your organization is facing. Communicate with them frequently to share information. Remember to talk about successes, too. This encourages people and helps them to reenergize.

2. Seek Their Ideas

Your employees view the situation at hand from their own unique perspectives. They may recognize opportunities and pitfalls that are not on your radar screen. Ask and listen. Then, put their insights and creativity to work to help you navigate through this challenging time. Besides, involvement in decisions and strategies gives your employees a sense of control and shows them their opinions matter.

3. Provide Meaningful Work

Understand your employees' strengths and intentionally draw upon those strengths. Give them work that plays to what they do best and at the same time enhances the goals of your organization. Their sense of purpose and accomplishment will lift their spirits and be contagious to everyone else.

4. Help Employees Manage Work/Life Balance

Employees may either be overworked during tough times or feel that they must give 125% to the organization 24/7 to ensure job security. Be sensitive to conditions that will lead to burnout. Be realistic yourself and help your employees be realistic about what is required of them. It is important that you help them maintain a healthy balance between their work lives and their personal lives.

5. Instill Optimism for the Future

Do all you can to manage judiciously during hard times and keep your eyes and your employees' eyes focused toward the future with optimism. No one knows for sure what curve might be thrown next, but it is healthier and more productive to infuse everyone's spirit, including your own, with hope and a positive outlook.