The Mathis Group's

Messenger

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Changing One Employee Will Impact Others

By Dr. Keith Mathis

Have you ever noticed how peer pressure and socialization causes the behavior of one employee to rub off on others? We can use this to our advantage in motivating our workforce.

Employees influence corporate culture.

Employees do not live in a vacuum. They each affect the culture and behaviors of the workplace, and, thus, they impact the behavioral norms of the organization. Ponder the trust of a poem I read recently entitled "My Influence."

My life shall touch a dozen lives
Before this day is done,
Leave countless marks of good or ill,
E'er sets the evening sun.
This, the wish I always wish,
The prayer I always pray;
Lord, may me life help other lives,
It touches by the way

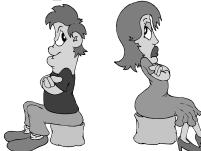
(7700 Illustrations, p.604).

Our lives *do* touch others all throughout the day. As the poem says, are we trying to help people, or do we propagate negativity throughout the organization?

Employees socialize together.

When employees socialize, it is not unusual for them to discuss their work and the direction in which the organization is headed. When you change one employee, it will ripple out and impact





all the other workers. For this reason, supervisors are well advised to make sure the changes encouraged in one employee will bring about the desired results and reinforce a positive work environment with the other personnel.

Employees can escalate bad situations and hurt the organization.

Employees commonly pass on gossip. Your organization no doubt has a rumor mill. It consists of talk about what is happening or alleged to be happening in the company.

You cannot stop the rumor mill, but you can increase it if you are not careful. Workers, not management, normally control rumors. When employees pass on a piece of juicy information, they typically add emotions and additional allegations to the rumor.

Most people if asked what they think about Adolf Hitler would say they hate what he did. However, we must admit that he had a gift for getting people to be passionate about following him. He did most of this through what he called making his message "burn" inside of people.

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I'm 100 percent for progress. It's all this change I'm against.

A politician

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In doing this, he gave people a cause to which they could be committed, but he did something more. In a tragically effective way, he had the ability to manipulate people so they would be passionate about the cause.

Don't misunderstand my point. Hitler was wicked and very misguided and twisted, but he was a highly motivator of people Recently, I read a quote from him that summarizes his philosophy for moving people to action. He said, "Say it simple, say if often. Make it burn."

When a supervisor makes a decision that dishonors, insults, or harms another person, it feeds the rumor mill. That is why managing the rumor mill is critically important for the leader's success. If supervisors honor their workers, this adds positive news to the gossip that is circulating.

Employees can exert pressure on peers to conform.

Employees exert pressure on each other that affects the morale of the company. An organization's spirit can be strongly affected by peer pressure. In many cases, an employee's behavior can be brought into check quicker with peer pressure than by means of employee discipline.

Organizations have an unspoken code of quality in the service they provide or the products they deliver. When workers break this code and are confronted by other employees, their behavior will be shaped faster than it would if management intervened.

Richard Hodgetts points out an excellent plan of action for reinforcing quality and continuous improvement in his book, <u>Blueprints For Continuous Improvement</u>.

Through speeches and other public pronouncements, as well as internal communications, each company expresses its beliefs and values regarding its commitment to customer service. Motorola, for example, has two key values regarding

The world hates change, yet it is the only thing that has brought progress.

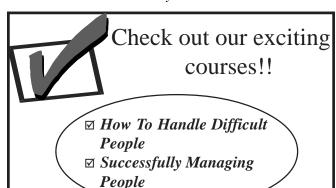
Charles F. Kettering

total customer satisfaction: (1) constant respect for people; and (2) uncompromising integrity. All customer service strategies are built around these tenets" (Hodgetts, R, Blueprints For Continuous Improvement, 1993, AMACOM, p.56).



"You can do anything if you have enthusiasm Enthusiasm is the spark in your eye, the swing in the gait, the grip of you hand, the irresistible surge of your will and your energy to execute your ideas Enthusiasm is at the bottom of all progress! With it, there is accomplishment. Without it there are only alibis."

Henry Ford



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