

EMPLOYEE ORIENTED CULTURE CRUCIAL TO BUSINESS SUCCESS



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Managements ability to recognize, acknowledge and utilize the American worker's drive and resilience through total-quality management (TQM) has played an important part in rejuvenating the US business climate.

Not long ago, the business environment was gripped by a fear that its core industries were failing into a second-class status with respect to Japan. The consensus was that excellent quality, manufacturing efficiency and a supportive government industrial policy had already led Japan to supremacy in autos, semiconductors and consumer electronics. The only question was what other major US industries would follow that course.

Fortunately, none did. American companies began to rediscover their vitality and ability to succeed. The old optimism returned. Many factors were responsible for this change, including the adoption of TQM interventions by many firms.

Implicit with these factors is the recognition that the resilience, spirit, ingenuity and drive of the American worker are partly, if not primarily, responsible for this dramatic rebound in competitiveness.

Savvy managers have always realized that employees remain a company's best asset. Essential to using that asset is effective management. The US secretary of labor recently cited five high-performance employee policies, including worker participation, on-the job training, profit sharing, flexible work rules and a safe work environment.

Success accrues from more than good human resource policies. It depends on how well those policies are implemented. Employee oriented managers share four key guidelines: creating an enabling culture and organization, practicing participative hiring, ensuring equitable recognition and reward, and demonstrating fairness during hard times.

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Fostering a positive, enabling company culture promotes an employee oriented environment. Essential to such a culture is a respect for the dignity and individuality of employees. Rules and policies aren't used to restrain and set limits but to unleash employees to be their most creative and productive. Popular practices, such as team building and employee empowerment, can help employees achieve their potential.

An enabling company culture helps heal, if not prevent, adversarial issues between management and the work force. Participative hiring involves future coworkers in the employment interview and selection process. Those who know the job environment best are able to look for and assess traits critical to a new employee success. The new employee gains a fuller understanding of the job starts with more accurate expectations and fits in more quickly with coworkers and the work environment

Equitable recognition and reward fuel employee motivation, the essence of productivity. However if a system of recognition and reward is unfair and biased, it can sow dissent and demotivate employees. Most worker, can sense when rewards and recognition fail to be objective or seem to be driven by factors other than performance.

On the issue of fairness during, difficult times, few companies can avoid painful work force reductions and other actions that have a direct impact on employees. The lasting effect on the company, good or bad, depends on how these actions are approached.

Demonstrating a sense of fairness and dignity in managing staff reductions and other personnel changes is consistent with, and grows out of, a positive company culture. Its important for departing and remaining employees to believe the company has been fair, ethical and sensitive in its policies and actions. Without that belief, recriminations will abound, hard earned goodwill will be quickly lost, and remaining workers will wonder when the ax will fall again

These concepts have been discussed before. What's crucial is the catalyst that determines whether they're really effective. That catalyst is how company management is oriented --to itself or to its employees.

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