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NEWSLETTER

Issue 33

## Solving the *Organizational Morale* Issue

Organizational morale refers to the way people feel about their jobs and the organization they work for. It includes the atmosphere of the workplace, the way people work together as a team, and their general level of confidence and satisfaction. For example, an organization with high morale would have a busy, but positive atmosphere, where everyone knew what was expected and worked well together to meet these common goals. High organizational morale usually leads to happy workers and financial success.

Low morale, on the other hand, can be a wildly destructive force. It can reduce productivity, harm relationships with clients and customers, and, ultimately, destroy the organization's bottom line. Many different things can trigger low organizational morale. Layoffs and job insecurity are among the most obvious. But, morale problems can also come from poor communication between managers and workers, hard work not being recognized or rewarded, or even missed opportunities for employees to socialize and bond with one another.

An organization with low morale must move quickly and decisively to fix the problem before it is out of control. For the most part, it is up to the managers and other senior staff to implement strategies that will fix the problem. However, the average worker does have some influence over improving morale.

Here are a few areas to consider when assessing your workplace:

### Communication

Good communication among workers, and between workers and their bosses is essential for high morale. People need to know their opinions are valued, and that someone is listening to what they have to say. Don't be afraid to express your opinions, especially related to your job (you know it better than anyone else!), and always take the time to listen to what others have to say. Think of your co-workers as teammates. It may sound corny, but it is true. You are all working towards the same goal, so keep each other informed of what you're doing, ask questions and find solutions to problems as a team.

Clear expectations are another element of having good organizational morale. In order to feel you are doing a good job, you must first understand what is expected of you. If you feel you don't understand a new project or task, schedule time with your boss to talk about the issue. Make some notes or write down some questions ahead of time, and ask her/him to provide you with a better explanation of your work. Don't feel you are wasting the boss's time. It is much better for her/him to know you have questions now, then to find out the work hasn't been done correctly several months down the road!

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## Solving the *Organizational Morale Issue (continued)*

### Involvement

Everyone wants to feel involved and important to the success of the organization. It is important that companies demonstrate their trust in their workforce by allowing employees to provide input, and help with decision-making related to their jobs. If your organization doesn't do this, you could suggest they develop problem-solving teams to work on particular issues, or even something as simple as a suggestion box that would allow people to make comments on improving performance. The more confidence an organization shows in its workers, the more confident and productive they will be.

### Environment

Another element to good organizational morale is the working environment. This includes both the physical environment and the social atmosphere of the workplace. In order to be productive, the physical environment of a workplace should be safe, comfortable and pleasant. Proper heating, ventilation, air conditioning and noise levels should all be considered, and problems should be pointed out to management. Chairs, desks and machinery should never be broken or in need of repair, and people who have to speak on the phone should have enough privacy that their conversations are not overheard or distracting to their fellow workers.

The social atmosphere of a workplace is also important. Chatting over a cup of coffee in the break room may not look like work, but it allows workers to connect on a social level, building trust and increasing good communication throughout the workplace. While it may be inappropriate for you to stop work for a 20-minute chat about your favourite TV show, a lot of employers provide opportunities, such as potlucks or birthday celebrations, for their workers to get together and socialize in a relaxed environment. Some places even have a "social committee" to plan upcoming celebrations and encourage everyone to participate.

### Appreciation

In any workplace, managers need to treat each employee as an individual, and recognize their hard work and contributions to the organization. Many good employees leave their jobs because they simply haven't received meaningful feedback on how they are doing, or the recognition they feel they deserve. It is important that an organization recognize each person's contribution to the company. This doesn't need to be a big gesture or cash prize. It is the recognition that counts not the reward.

If you feel your workplace could benefit from some kind of employee recognition program, you should suggest it to your superior. Some companies institute a "penny prize," where employees are given a penny as a reward for their contribution to the company. The amount of the reward is not important, being recognized in front of the entire staff for your achievements is.

No one wants to work in an environment where people are unhappy, stressed out or feel they can't make a difference. While it may seem it is the boss's job to keep the workers happy, everyone can have a hand in improving morale and making their organization a great place to go to work.

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