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Got Growth?

Focus, performance, morale pay dividends

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"For every action, there is an equal but opposite reaction" -- Sir Isaac Newton's' Third Law of Motion. This simple law of physics may have more to do with business than anything you have been taught or told by your teachers, peers, associates or consultants.

Ever had a salesperson on commission? Whose fault was it when he or she started earning more in commission than your salary even though revenue was still flat ... or worse? Whose fault was it when purchasing spent 250 percent of budget and bought a four-year supply of packing peanuts? Just two examples of how an equal but opposite reaction occurred from a poorly thought-out strategy or instruction. And the worst part is that we are paying our staff to act this way! In short, we have met the enemy, and it is us. We are actually hiring the enemies we think we are trying to compete with.

Let me get this out right up front: There is no competitor big enough, bad enough or strong enough to hurt you if you do three simple things.

Focus

First, be crystal clear about your organization and the business you are in; why you exist and the value you are there to deliver. Sometimes we call it vision, or mission. Bottom line, how can your staff be focused on any goal if you aren't clear on what that goal or objective is? Unfortunately that is not enough. You still need to communicate it in a manner that is understood and make sure the message comes through the way you want it to.

Performance

This is where the magic starts to appear; everyone in your organization has to perform.

Mediocre performance cannot be tolerated, which means you need consistent high performance and you need it from everyone in your organization from the maintenance people to the typing pool, and everywhere in between. The good news is it really isn't all that difficult.

I can hear you already. "Do you think we don't hire the best we can find? Do you think we don't do everything in our power to help our staff succeed?" Of course, I think you think you do, but what about those problems that always seem to crop up? Like the commission program that produces big sales commissions without increasing revenue? For every action

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Everyone wants to do a good job and be recognized for it. When you hire people do you hire them to do a job or do you hire them to help your organization succeed? Do they understand their role in terms that connect them to the big picture or are they kept in the dark and expected to do some seemingly inconsequential tasks? Do you create the culture in your organization or do you let it develop on its own?

A lot of buzzwords, you say, and buzzwords they are. Work they do. Create positive results they do. Helping people understand why they are there and what they need to be doing is what all this "soft, fuzzy stuff" is about and why it exists. It exists because it works. The clearer you can be about your organization, the more likely you will be to attract those people who want to be a part of your success.

Morale

People have to be recognized and rewarded for doing their jobs, especially when they do them well. "Isn't that what we pay them for?" you say. Of course it is, but that is not enough. Study after study has shown that money is not the driving force that creates outstanding performance. It is respect for skill and recognition of a job well done. The No. 1 reason people leave an organization is because of the boss. Whose job is it to communicate the whys and hows of a position? Whose job is it to monitor, recognize and reward performance? That is one of the critical roles of every supervisor, manager, director, vice president, and yes, even the CEO.

The best companies know who they are, what they do, and who they do it for. It is easy to communicate value, which makes it easy to sell. They deliver, which makes it easy to retain customers. They reward their staff, which makes it easy to attract and retain high-performance people who produce big results. Without positive morale no one is happy. Without clarity of purpose, no one knows what high performance is. And without positive morale, you won't succeed.

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