5 Factors That Affect Your Employee’s Productivity

Making Employee Productivity a Slam Dunk

by Dr. Jan Stringer, Ph.D

1. Attitude Is Everything

Happy employees are productive employees. And it doesn’t take a rocket scientist or a consulting firm to figure that one out. Negative attitudes can torpedo employee productivity much faster than nonstop basketball being streamed over the Web.

“An employee with a positive attitude usually enjoys the work that they do and feels empowered and recognized for their contributions,” said Henning. “An employee that is complacent and does not really enjoy their work, but is simply there for a paycheck usually does not produce at a high level, develops a bad attitude and generally drags a team down.”

2. Boss Is the Barrier

How can you improve employee productivity when the boss stinks? A recent poll found that, among other things, an employee’s productivity is determined by their relationship with their immediate supervisor. When the bad boss fails to keep promises, never gives credit when due, makes negative comments, or blames others for their mistakes, the productivity level of their employees is significantly impacted.

“A poor supervisor is definitely the No. 1 factor that causes low productivity,” said Barry L. Brown, President of a Florida-based consulting group. “It’s been my experience that a good supervisor will motivate, inspire, encourage and reward good performance. A poor supervisor, of course, is just the opposite, only in multiples. Employees who do not have a direct connection with the company begin to lose all the reasons for wanting to do that little bit extra and take the additional time to make something right.”

3. Productivity: In Sickness and in Health

Health concerns, naturally, are a big drain on an employee’s ability to be productive, and companies know it. At the SHRM Conference and Exposition last June in Washington, D.C., a survey showed that 85 percent of U.S. employers said they were interested in services to increase employee productivity, minimize absences and enhance the health of their employees.

Estimates show that 18 to 20 million American adults age 19 to 64 are not working due to a disability or chronic disease, or are not working because of health reasons. Roughly 69 million workers reported missing days due to illness last year, for a total of 407 million days of lost time at work. Along these same lines, nearly 40 percent of U.S. workers experience fatigue, according to a study in the January “Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.” Researchers noted that the effects of
fatigue, most related to a wide range of physical and mental health problems, on health-related lost productive time is not just absenteeism but also days the employee is at work and is performing at less than full capacity because of health reasons. For U.S. employers, fatigue carries overall estimated costs of more than $136 billion per year in health-related lost productivity, $101 billion more than for workers without fatigue. Eighty-four percent of the costs were related to reduced performance while at work, rather than absences.

4. It’s the Tech Tools, Stupid

All the feel-good, psychological methods of improving employee productivity are great, but they’re useless without the right tools. And the right tools mean the right technology. For an employee to be efficient and productive in today’s job environment means equipping employees with the right gear. Companies that don’t upgrade or ignore the necessity for tech tools like PCs, Blackberries, cell phones and other 21st century tools, run the risk of diminished employee productivity.

Intel, the world’s largest semiconductor maker, found that wireless notebook PC users increased their productivity by 100 hours per year. They studied the work habits and productivity of more than 100 Intel employees who were upgraded to wireless notebooks and found a gain of more than two hours per week, more than paying for the cost of the upgrades in the first year. They also found that when workers were able to control more of their time, that productivity increased as well.

5. Downsizing and Outsourcing Morale

Ever vigilant of saving a buck and satisfying Wall Street, corporate America has turned to cutting corners by downsizing and outsourcing. Simply put, downsizing expensive labor while outsourcing a cheaper version. For employees remaining in those offices and factories, their morale and motivation can take a big hit. Translation: Will the moves to save money be contradicted by a loss in productivity from disgruntled employees? In most cases, employers fail to recognize that if they downsize or outsource, they need to provide support to the employees that remain. The psychological impact on employees can directly impact productivity, forcing many to focus on their second careers instead of the job at hand.