

ATN Business Sense  
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How do you get the best out of your people? Certainly not by terminating a driver raising a fatigue breach and then punishing him by withdrawing work as was reported recently. That was bullying which is perhaps more common than it should be. Bullying is never acceptable. Also by not permitting your people to watch or listen to the Melbourne Cup! While the first is a major issue and the latter minor they are symptoms of a workplace malaise.

Employers need to be fair to their people and remember that work is only part of their lives. Their people are sons, daughters, wives, mothers and parents; they all have personal lives with many commitments and obligations. Everyone deserves respect, and need life balance.

The objective should be to make your business a top place to work. That means a manager's job is to make people successful, not by being a policeman but by finding a way to energise, excite and enthuse them. Increasing productivity of people is important and research by Amabile & Kramer reported in the May 2011 Harvard Business Review found "what motivates people on a day-to-day basis is the sense that they are making progress." When you think about it that makes great sense.

So, what can be done in the workplace to energise your people? The authors found that people "at least in the realm of knowledge work are more creative and productive when their work lives are positive – when they feel happy, are intrinsically motivated by the work itself, and have positive perceptions of their colleagues and the organization." Many businesses have inhibitors or blockers – people who always find reasons not to change or improve processes or constantly find faults everywhere; they blame others for their problems. Some actively hinder work and are so negative and toxic they are like cancer. Be fair and provide an antidote by coaching, training and mentoring offenders. If they learn and cease being a blocker or inhibitor, fine, if they fail to change the toxin should be removed from the business.

Businesses also have people who are positive catalysts who support and encourage their team. They nourish by demonstrating respect and consideration for their people. Small wins should be fostered as they can boost work life substantially. As Frederick Herzberg found in 1968 "People are most satisfied with their jobs (and therefore most motivated) when those jobs give them the opportunity to experience achievement."

Amabile and Kramer developed a daily progress checklist which they recommend be used near the end of the day. It covers progress, setbacks, catalysts and inhibitors, nourishers and toxins, inner work life and an action plan. For example: "What can I do tomorrow to strengthen the catalysts and nourishers identified and provide the ones that are lacking?"

A good manager will visibly remove obstacles, materially support progress and emotionally support their team. They will identify problems and their causes, provide

back up and facilitate action plans. Also, they continue to be attuned to everyday activities and progress. Team members update their manager without being asked. A great manager is an established resource for a team rather than being a micro manager. There is a loop of continuous progress and improvement. The manager facilitates steady progress in meaningful work and their people are treated well.

In summary, provide leadership, ownership, simplicity, thrift and flair. Use KPI's graphically as trends. Make them visible to all and celebrate milestones.

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