

## **I guess I'll hire happier people**

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I am tired of watching companies jump through endless hoops trying to raise morale and make their employees happier on the job. Don't get me wrong, I believe strongly in good team morale and I am adamant about the effect good morale has on service levels and bottom line efficiency. I also confirm that it is the responsibility of the manager to create the type of environment that is conducive to happiness on the job and growth opportunities for employees. There comes a point, though, that the "happiness factor" of the staff becomes the responsibility of each individual employee.

Several decades ago, the business climate consisted of a very hierarchical relationship between employees and their boss. The boss called the shots and subordinates did what they were told, no questions asked. Fall short of your assignment and you could be fired.

The 1980's introduced a number of new ideas into the workplace, such as management by objectives and flattening the organizational chart so that manager and staff were seen more as a team on a somewhat level playing field. Productivity went up and employee turnover slowed; adding millions of dollars to the bottom line. As we progressed through the next couple of decades, many leaders who were looking for continuous improvement in employee morale and "team spirit" continued to soften their stance with nonperforming employees and took the attitude that it was management's responsibility help people succeed in their jobs.

Any good thing taken to extremes can have a negative effect. Today we have a service industry workplace filled with whining, sniveling, self-centered employees who are not fully committed to serving the customer and feel no obligation to change. Enough is enough.

A long time friend of mine recently took a position as Executive Vice President of a company that serves the travel industry. After evaluating the economic status of the organization, he called a meeting with the staff and walked them through the plans and actions he had developed to put the company back into a profitable situation.

He laid out goals and expectations along with support and training information for the staff. When offering to answer any questions, someone asked from the back of the room: "what are you going to do about morale around here?" My friend simply replied: "I guess I'll just hire happier people".

You could have heard a pin drop. It is my understanding that morale began to improve that very day.