

Twenty Dumb Things Organizations Do to Mess Up Their Relationship With People

Twenty Mistakes Organizations Make

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Even the best organizations periodically make mistakes in dealing with people. They mess up their opportunity to create effective, successful, positive employee relations.

They treat people like children and then ask why people fail so frequently to live up to their expectations. Managers apply different rules to different employees and wonder why workplace negativity is so high. People work hard and infrequently receive positive feedback.

At the same time, many organizations invest untold energy in actions that ensure employees are unhappy. They ensure ineffective employee relations results. As an example, one of the most important current trends in organizations is increasing employee involvement and input. Organizations must find ways to utilize all of the strengths of the people they employ. Or, people will leave to find work in an organization that does.

According to Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, the number of people in the labor force ages 25 to 34 is projected to decline by 2.7 million in the next seven years. To meet this challenge, work places need to recruit new populations and non-traditional employees. And, workplaces urgently need to retain valued employees.

The book, *High Five*, by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles talks about building powerfully effective teams. The book emphasizes that "the essence of a team," according to Dr. Blanchard, is "the genuine understanding that none of us is as smart as all of us."

Teams allow people to achieve things far beyond our own individual ability. But teamwork also requires powerful motivation for people to put the good of the group ahead of their own self interest.

Pull these workplace trends together and it is no wonder that the Dilbert cartoon is perennially popular. Consider that Scott Adams, the strip's creator, will never run out of material because, despite what organizations want – or say they want - they often fail to:

- retain valued employees,

- develop empowered people working together to serve the best interests of the organization, and
- create an environment in which each employee contributes all of their talents and skills to the success of organizational goals.

The next time you are confronted with any of the following proposed actions, ask yourself this question. Is the action likely to create the result, for powerfully motivating employee relations, that you want to create?

Twenty Dumb Mistakes Employers Make

Here are the twenty dumb mistakes organizations make to mess up their relationships with the people they employ:

- Add another level of hierarchy because people aren't doing what you want them to do. (More watchers get results!)
- Appraise the performance of individuals and provide bonuses for the performance of individuals and complain that you cannot get your staff working as a team.
- Add inspectors and multiple audits because you don't trust people's work to meet standards.
- Fail to create standards and give people clear expectations so they know what they are supposed to do, and wonder why they fail.
- Create hierarchical, permission steps and other roadblocks that teach people quickly their ideas are subject to veto and wonder why no one has any suggestions for improvement. (Make people beg for money!)
- Here are fifteen more mistakes organizations make to mess up their relationships with people. Avoid these employee relations nightmares.
- Ask people for their opinions, ideas, and continuous improvement suggestions, and fail to implement their suggestions or empower them to do so. Better? Don't even provide feedback about whether the idea was considered.
- Make a decision and then ask people for their input as if their feedback mattered.
- Find a few people breaking rules and company policies and chide everybody at company meetings rather than dealing directly with the rule breakers. Better? Make everyone wonder "who" the bad guy is.
- Make up new rules for everyone to follow as a means to address the failings of a few.
- Provide recognition in expected patterns so that what started as a great idea quickly becomes entitlement. (As an example, buy Friday lunch when production goals are met. Wait until people start asking you for the money if they cannot attend the lunch!)

- Treat people as if they are untrustworthy - watch them, track them, admonish them for every slight failing - because a few people are untrustworthy.
- Fail to address behavior and actions of people that are inconsistent with stated and published organizational expectations and policies. (Better yet, let non-conformance go on until you are out of patience; then ambush the next offender with a disciplinary action!)
- When managers complain they cannot get to all of their reviews because they have too many directly reporting staff members, hire more supervisors to do reviews. (Fail to recognize that an hour per quarter per person invested in development is the manager's most important job.)
- Create policies for every contingency, thus allowing very little management latitude in addressing individual employee needs.
- Conversely, have so few policies, that employees feel as if they reside in a free-for-all environment of favoritism and unfair treatment.
- Make every task a priority. People will soon believe there are no priorities. More importantly, they will never feel as if they have accomplished a complete task or goal.
- Schedule daily emergencies that prove to be false. This will ensure employees don't know what to do, or are, minimally, jaded about responding when you have a true customer emergency.
- Ask employees to change the way they are doing something without providing a picture of what you are attempting to accomplish with the change. Label them "resisters" and send them to change management training when they don't immediately hop on the train.
- Expect that people learn by doing everything perfectly the first time rather than recognizing that learning occurs most frequently in failure.
- Letting a person fail when you had information, that he did not, which he might have used to make a different decision.

These various ingredients add up to a recipe for disaster if you want to be the employer of choice in the next decade.