

Power Up Your People  
by Linda Hanson, CMC

How do you ensure 2007 will be a good year for you and your company? Get yourself and your troops powered up. The hard truth is that the only person who can motivate you is . . . you! And, when it comes to your employees your job and that of your managers is to get everyone motivated and moving forward. Below are ways to help keep you and your team powered up.

1. **Watch Your Language.** I'm not talking about swearing, I'm referring to vague, panic-ridden language that heightens employee anxiety. Your goal is to remind employees where you are going in the long term not to threaten them by saying, "Okay we need to do more so pull together or we won't be here next year." Whether 2007 looks like a good or a bad year, ensure you are motivating and supporting your employees.
2. **Celebrate the victories -- even the little ones.** If things are not going well, don't get so focused on bad news that you forget to celebrate your success no matter how small. Try to highlight at least one success at every meeting. Lawrence Fish, chairman, president, and CEO of Citizens Bank, makes it a habit to write a thank-you or congratulatory note every day to someone on his team. Don't dismiss small gestures: They cast big shadows. In good times as well as bad times, people like to be thanked.
3. **Be a Good Coach.** Take a lesson from football coaches! Words of encouragement and praise remind the team that they can be the best only by deciding to be the best. The coach makes everyone want to improve and win by talking about their possibilities not about their failures or mistakes. The coach doesn't talk down or yell at people. It is easy to find fault and criticize. Have you ever wished your people were as accountable, responsible and hard working as you? Do you often hope your people will change and get better? To build a successful business, you can't do it alone. You need staff, suppliers, subcontractors, managers, foreman and workers to get the job done. Everyone wants to do a good job. And the simplest way to get what you want is to be a good coach. People want to do more, so remember their output is the result of your input. All it takes is a little praise or compliments from their coach.
4. **Be Visible.** When things aren't going well, people tend to go hide in their offices but this is exactly the time when you should be out there the most. Spend more time with employees, customers and suppliers. Use down times to continue developing relationships and learning from those around you. Help employees move forward and take on new projects and new skills. Nothing comes to those who wait. Try to spend 10% or 15% of your time developing your people so you can grow your company with powerful people.
5. **Give Time Off.** If revenues or profits are off, bonuses, promotions and raises are in short supply. What companies refuse to acknowledge is that for many employees, money and leisure time compete pretty equally with each other. A way to show you care about your people, if you can't give them a raise, is to consider giving them extra time off. Or offer flexible work arrangements that will allow employees to pursue personal interests, classes, or other opportunities outside work.

6. **Less action? Try more talk.** Take a page out of FedEx CIO Robert Carter's book: He sponsors town-hall meetings with his IT staff about every six weeks, and he sits down each month with eight randomly selected employees over lunch or breakfast. Power up your team by using frequent, informal conversations. That way, your people are motivated and working harder.

It takes a combination of soft skills and people skills to power up your people. And as simplistic as some of the above ideas sound, it is important to focus on motivating your people in a positive way. The end result will be worth it

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