

The Top Ten Ways to Change a Mediocre Employee Into a High

Performing One

By Monty J. Sharp

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Teambuilding expert and business consultant, Peter B. Grazier once said, “Employees want to contribute with their minds and abilities. They only have to be asked.” No one starts out wanting to be mediocre. We each have an innate desire to please, to excel at something. So why then do so many employees seem to work beneath their potential? More importantly, how can managers and employers turn under-performing employees into high performing ones? Here are ten ways to do just that.

1. Find out what motivates your employees. To do this, you must first discover what people value. Until you get in touch with what people perceive as valuable, you'll never be able to motivate them effectively. Don't be fooled – it's not always more money either.

2. Give employees a reason why. Managers and employers are often good at telling their employees “what” to do, but seldom give them a compelling reason “why” they are doing it and why it is important. Busy managers often resort to the “Do it because I say so” mentality treating their employees like disobedient children in need of reproof.

3. Make a way “up”. Develop your employees. Find out their career goals and aspirations and help them achieve them. Why would someone want to excel at a “dead end” job? Would you?

4. Be a leader – not a dictator. Demand the best from your employees, but develop them in order for them to make good decisions. This will instill in them a sense of ownership and confidence in the organization.

5. Actively solicit input from your employees. Being a good leader doesn't mean being a “know-it-all”. Solicit input from your team. Nothing kills team spirit and consequently high performance, faster than a leader with a “my way or the highway” mentality.

6. Be a “responder” – not a “reactor”. By the time you react to employee issues, it's already too

late. Really listen to your employees and allow time in your day and in your mind to see the “big picture.”

7. Listen with awareness. Your employees are constantly telling you, both verbally and non-verbally, what they need or want regarding ways to improve their performance. Are you listening?

8. Be a model. People will respond according to the actions – not the words of their leaders. Performance advisor and author, Darcy Hitchcock, puts it this way: “employees are professional ‘boss watchers’. That is, what managers say means nothing unless their actions model what they say.” Leading is the act of influencing others to act, which is difficult if you have one set of standards for yourself and another for everybody else.

9. Innovate! Create and foster an environment of creativity in your workplace. Aggressively solicit, encourage and implement new ideas and ways of doing things. If the “status quo” is no longer working, don’t be afraid to be radical in your approaches.

10. Be a Coach. Hire a Coach. Many managers will say that they coach their employees, but, when pressed, few know exactly what that means much less how to do it effectively. Effective coaching involves an exquisite set of skills that need to be mastered in order to get sustainable results. Also, the best coaches have their own coach to help keep them at the “top of their game.”

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