

THE

MOTIVATIONAL MANAGER

Sample

Strategies to
increase morale
and productivity
in the workplace

How to help workers develop that 'can-do' spirit

You may offer good merchandise at low prices. But that may not be enough if your employees are sluggish, whiny, or obviously couldn't care less. Your customers have their own troubles and the last thing they need is a dose of misery from someone else. Here's how to encourage your workers to put on a happy face:

- **Nix the drama.** Crises happen—but they shouldn't be a way of life no matter what business you're in. Times of intense effort must be balanced by slower periods that allow people to regroup their emotions and recharge their creative batteries. Constantly cracking the whip doesn't motivate workers to go the extra mile—it drives them to burn out. And when they're not updating their résumés, they're probably seething with resentment that they don't bother to hide from your customers. Moreover, they're probably rushing through customer encounters in order to meet some arbitrary quota that has nothing to do with providing good service.
- **Set a good example.** If "Thank God It's Friday" is the only tune your employees ever hear you hum, it's time to broaden your repertoire. You're human and it's natural to occasionally long for the end of a tough week. But if you make it clear that you're just putting in your time—as another song says, always "workin' for the weekend"—you're sending a message that will under-

mine morale. Find a way to take pleasure in your daily tasks and show your staff that work doesn't have to be drudgery.

- **Create a "No Moan Zone."** Your employees and customers don't want to hear the daily tribulations of Wendy Whiner and Pouty Pete. Again, people are human and occasionally have those "It's 95 degrees and I got a flat tire while carpooling five 10-year-olds on the day they had to bring in their pets for show-and-tell" mornings that *have* to be shared. But chronic complaining about work or personal problems should not be tolerated—especially within customers' earshot.
- **Rewrite your internal dialogue.** Do you continually berate yourself for minor mistakes or repeatedly replay negative incidents in your mind? Your thinking has a tremendous impact on your outward appearance. Remember that mistakes are learning experiences. Make a mental note of the lesson, then move on. As you develop the knack for dwelling on the positive, your facial expressions and body language will begin to reflect your new attitude—and the people around you will begin to mirror your behavior.

—Adapted from "Create a positive, upbeat, 'can-do' workforce and dazzle the customer with your caring!" by JoAnna Brandi, on WebProNews.com

Inside This Issue

Beware of these demotivators.
• page 2 •

Four ways to inspire workers to meet your expectations.
• page 3 •

Use these strategies to create a more truthful workforce.
• page 4 •

Read the Manager's Idea File to learn what motivates people to fly.
• page 5 •

Invigorate your management training with this game.
• page 9 •

Take these five steps toward networking success.
• page 10 •

Uncover the secret to team cohesiveness.
• page 11 •

Find out how to make the office grapevine work for you.
• page 12 •

Give workers a direct pipeline

No matter how many times you *tell* workers you want their feedback, it won't sink in until you *show* them you mean it. Mike Warren—CEO of Alagasco, Alabama's largest natural gas distributor—drives home the message by prominently displaying “Hey Mike” suggestion cards throughout the organization. Workers using the cards can be assured their comments will get the boss's full attention.

—Adapted from GoalManager.com

Keep colleagues in the loop—your career depends on it

You share information with employees and supervisors. What's left? Colleagues. One manager, assigned to lead a team designing a new product-distribution program, was shocked to receive negative feedback on her management style. Her bosses and staff seemed happy. But after reviewing her colleagues' comments, she realized she'd left them out of the process. The omission cost her the goodwill of peers whose cooperation she needed—and eventually cost her the opportunity to transfer to a better position. To avoid a similar fate, make sure you regularly touch base with individuals at all levels of your organization.

—Adapted from “One way to get ahead: Bragging,” by Katherine Reynolds Lewis, in the *Seattle Times*

'C' how to end conflicts

The next time you're trying to resolve a workplace conflict, just remember the four “Cs”:

- **Communication.** Don't sulk. Talk out the problem.
- **Cooperation.** Work together to figure out exactly where you're at odds. You can't solve what you can't identify.
- **Compromise.** Each of you should prioritize what's most important to you. Once you know what you must keep, you'll know what you're willing to give up.
- **Consolidation.** Avoid future misunderstandings by formalizing your agreement in writing.

—Adapted from the Seton Hall University Web site

Take care not to demotivate with the 'last straw'

You know the phrase: *That was the last straw!* The meaning: Someone was just pushed to the breaking point. The result? Resignation. Temper tantrum in front of customers or clients. Maybe worse. The question: *How do you avoid delivering the straw that breaks the camel's back?* Beware of these demotivators:

- **Dumping.** Do you have an assignment that's extremely time consuming or potentially career breaking? Is it unlike anything your staff has worked on before? Then, for heaven's sake, don't just dump it on some poor unsuspecting worker—no matter how talented—and leave that person to handle or figure it out alone. First, make sure the employee has the time and skills to cope with a project of this magnitude. Then provide the necessary resources and support. And

finally, monitor progress, providing guidance and positive feedback as warranted.

- **Disrupting.** Bringing new people into the mix can be a positive experience when they're skilled, trained, and up-to-speed on current projects. But tossing new, unprepared players into an already tight game can undermine your team's cohesiveness and create more problems than it resolves.
- **Denying.** When you fail to thank workers for their daily contributions, you miss a golden opportunity to motivate and build loyalty. But when you neglect to appropriately recognize and reward extraordinary efforts or accomplishments, you deny workers their due—and crush their spirit.

—Adapted from “Memo to managers: The straw that can break the employee's back,” by Sue Dwan, in *New Zealand Business*

Use this approach to improve workers' people skills

The hard side of the business—expertise, product quality, price structure—may draw customers to your door. But it's usually the soft skills—how your customer reps treat them—that keeps them coming back. Of course, you can teach hard skills, but how do you plant the seeds of personality on barren soil? Here are some guidelines:

1. **Emphasize the little things.** Some people instinctively know how to show appreciation or offer consolation. For those who don't, provide a checklist of the basics. Smile. Be welcoming. Offer assistance. Listen to questions and complaints. Apologize when something goes wrong. Never lose your temper. Always say thank you.
2. **Highlight best practices.** Make a note each time a worker successfully resolves a customer complaint, then share those examples at staff meetings or post them on the company intranet. Reward workers who provide empathetic service.

Continually drive home the message: This is how it *should* be done.

3. **Create strategic partnerships.** When making shift or station assignments, try to balance the number of extroverts and introverts. Don't assign your most outgoing workers to one station and your shyest to another. Mix things up so introverts can learn by example—and extroverts can step in to help if need be.
4. **Offer ongoing training.** Many organizations address people issues during orientation, but focus solely on hard skills when providing continuing education. Give soft skills equal time by periodically booking workshops on those issues. And engage in role-playing scenarios that force introverts to venture out of their shells.

—Adapted from “The biz question,” by Donna Hall, on the Business Owner's Idea Café Web site

Ask these questions to gauge feelings on diversity

Do your employees need diversity training? Find out by asking your staff (or a representative focus group) these questions:

1. **Obstacles.** *In this organization, what obstacles face employees who differ from the mainstream?* If mainstream workers see no obstacles while minority workers see many, yours is a house divided.
2. **Deeds.** *What, if any, acts of discrimination have you experienced?* The more specific the answers, the more likely a lawsuit.
3. **Behaviors.** *What, if any, behaviors of workers from groups other than*

yours most irritate you? Be wary of answers that suggest stereotypic thinking.

4. **Comfort.** *What groups of people do you find it easiest to cooperate with? Most difficult?* Ideally, answers will be behavior based—for instance, they have difficulty cooperating with rigid people. If workers find it difficult to work with others simply because of their age, race, gender, religion, etc., more training is needed.

—Adapted from the Diversity Training University International Web site

Adopt these principles to keep employees motivated

How do you motivate employees? Wrong question. Employees are already motivated. Heck, we're all motivated by something or we wouldn't get out of bed in the morning. The question is how do you motivate employees *to perform to your standards*. Here are a few principles to keep in mind:

- **Workers do things for their own reasons.** Let's face it, people don't go to work each day because they're gung ho to further the interests of their employer. The primary reason people go to work each day is to pay their bills. Such things as career ambition, love of job or coworkers, and loyalty to the organization are secondary motivators—and that's where you come in. Your mission is to uncover each worker's secondary motivators and use them to your advantage.
- **It takes pain to prompt change.** If you've ever been through a restructuring, you know that change is hard. In fact, it's so hard that people won't take the necessary steps to change their behavior unless it becomes more painful for them to remain as they are. But that doesn't mean you

should threaten or punish your staff into compliance. Take a different tack: Find ways to make the desired change seem so appealing that it will pain workers to remain as they are.

- **To motivate, you must "reach out and touch."** When you want workers to improve their productivity or take on a difficult task, look for ways to make it personal. Connect the dots and show your employees how doing their best for the department, customer, or organization benefits them. If you can get them to take their projects personally, their jobs will become more important to them.
- **What goes around comes around.** If you want workers to pay attention to your needs—pay attention to theirs. Of course you should listen to employees' ideas and concerns. But you should also listen to their interests and aspirations. Earning trust is the first step to earning loyalty. And the more you know about your staff, the better you'll be able to ensure their needs are met—which will motivate them to meet yours.

—Adapted from "Ten principles of motivation," by Nido R. Qubein, in *Executive Excellence*

Have job candidates learned their lessons?

Spice up your next job interview by asking this loaded question: *What did you do to rectify your last mistake?* The best prospects are those who:

1. Willingly admit they've made mistakes (hasn't everyone?)
2. Have taken deliberate steps to correct their mistakes
3. Have learned enough from their experiences that they can recount them when asked this type of question

And take special note of those who tell you their first step was to apologize or take responsibility—which is a sign of strong character.

—Adapted from "Time to re-think how you interview job prospects," by L. Gary Boomer, in *Accounting Today*

Take this approach to finding a mentor

Not all organizations make mentoring a priority, but that doesn't mean you must do without. Learn what you can about your organization's leaders: background, philosophy, etc. Select someone with the qualities you admire and request a little guidance. Ask if this individual would be willing to, say, have lunch with you once a month and discuss your career path. Most people are flattered to know others admire and want to emulate them, and chances are your chosen mentor will gladly give you that hour a month—and probably more.

—Adapted from "Mentoring: A crucial factor in workplace success," on the Advancing Women Web site

Web Access

Visit the
Motivational Manager Web site at
www.management
resources.com

Are you confusing ‘recognition’ with ‘perks’?

You bring doughnuts to weekly staff meetings, treat the staff to lunch once a month, and invite the whole gang to a barbecue every Labor Day. Surely your employees know their efforts are appreciated. Yes . . . and no. You’re helping to create a pleasant environment where all workers feel valued. But those perks are available to everyone. Recognition is about individual achievement—shining a light on one person’s efforts (or a specific team accomplishment) and publicly saying “Well done!” If you’re confusing perks with recognition, your staff may be having a good time—but feeling unappreciated. —Adapted from “Making recognition real,” on the Maritz Incentives Web site

Beware these touchy subjects

Interviewing? Of course you should talk to prospective hires about company history, job responsibilities, salary, benefits, and long-term growth potential. But here’s what you *should not* discuss:

- Proprietary technologies or strategies—yours or your clients’
- Details about other candidates
- Gossip about the company or its employees
- Your personal feelings about employees
- Your unsubstantiated beliefs about the company’s future plans
- Anything that could be construed as a promise of employment

—Adapted from “What you DON’T say to job seekers,” by Bill Radin, on the For Recruiters Web site

Don’t be too quick to negotiate

Most people are uncomfortable with conflict and want quick resolution. But don’t be hasty. Take some time to think about what you need to gain from a negotiation before you seek resolution. Otherwise, you could end up giving away too much too soon—and wind up feeling even more uncomfortable with the outcome.

—Adapted from “Resolving everyday conflicts sooner,” by Kare Anderson, on the Pertinent Information Web site

Four things you can do to get workers to tell you the truth

Should people tell the truth? *Of course*, you say. But what if the truth hurts? Do you *really* want to know what employees think of your pet project or your management style? Probably not. But there’s a difference between wanting to know something and needing to know. You may not *want* to hear bad news, but as a manager, you *need* to hear it. And here’s how you can convince employees to give it to you:

- 1. Hold your tongue.** An employee has just shared negative feedback. Your gut reaction is to breathe fire. That’s why you should hold your tongue. Try to nod your head and look as though you’re pondering this bit of news as you count to 10 and try to keep your composure. If need be, simply tell the employee you’ll have to give the comments more thought before you respond. Act as nonchalant as possible until you’ve had time to cool down.
- 2. Recognize the effort.** Even if you can’t bring yourself to do it immediately, always make a point of thank-

ing the truth teller. And if the information was shared in front of others, make sure to offer your thanks publicly. You want to send a message that a) workers aren’t penalized for being honest, and b) you are a manager who *values* forthrightness.

- 3. Solicit additional info.** People need to feel needed, so asking others for help is a real morale booster. If someone tells you a hard truth, ask for that person’s input on how you should handle the situation. You aren’t obligated to follow the advice, but you’ll win approval points for making the gesture.
- 4. Reward your truth-tellers.** If you want to create a culture of honesty, incorporate truth telling into your incentive and recognition programs. And when promoting, give preferential consideration to those who are fearlessly honest no matter how high the stakes.

—Adapted from “Encourage truth telling,” by Rick Brenner, on the Chaco Canyon Consulting Web site

Accident-proof your workplace with these guidelines

It’s far less painful—for morale *and* the corporate wallet—to prevent an accident than to recover from one. To improve safety consciousness in your department, ask these questions:

- **Identification.** *Have I conducted a safety audit and identified hazardous tasks or equipment? Am I aware of which work activities are most likely to lead to employee stress or fatigue?*
- **Elimination.** *Have I eliminated unnecessary hazards and found ways to minimize those that can’t be eliminated?*
- **Explanation.** *Have I stressed the importance of safety to my staff? Have I distributed appropriate educational materials and prominently displayed relevant OSHA safety posters?*

- **Participation.** *Have I looked for ways to involve employees in the safety process—for instance, by asking workers to create their own lists of potential hazards I may have overlooked?*

- **Motivation.** *Have I created an incentive program that will promote safety awareness and reward those who put safety first?*

- **Preparation.** *If the worst happens, do I have an accident plan in place and does each employee know what procedures to follow?*

—Adapted from “Winning the paper war: Keeping your workplace safe and healthy,” by Paul Jarvie, in the *New Zealand Herald*

THE MANAGER'S

iDeA File

Learning the value of a trial run

This is *it*—your Big Moment. The audience waits in breathless anticipation as you take the stage to demonstrate your much-ballyhooed technology, the program that promises to revolutionize your industry. But no matter how reliable your product, no matter how thoroughly you've planned your presentation, you can never discount the Murphy factor: *If something can go wrong, it will*—as Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos learned the hard way.

Bezos was giving a presentation on Amazon.com's recommendation feature to an audience of about 500 people. As he explained, each time users log on to the site, they can access a list of personal recommendations for everything from books and films to toys and kitchen appliances. The system constructs the list based on each customer's purchase history.

Since a picture paints a thousand words, Bezos decided to demonstrate the feature by logging on to Amazon himself so a page bearing his personal recommendations would be projected onto a screen for all to see. He signed on, entered his password, and *voilà!* Based on his previous buying habits, the top recommendation from the DVD store: *Slave Girls From Beyond Infinity*. As it turns out, the software program made the recommendation because a week earlier Bezos had purchased the campy Jane Fonda sci-fi cult classic *Barbarella*. Even so, he joked later, "It was a little embarrassing."

—Adapted from "Face time with Jeff Bezos," by Charles Fishman, in *Fast Company*

Dying for a compliment

You've heard the old expression "Don't speak ill of the dead." It might be a better world—and certainly a happier workplace—if people would stop speaking ill of the *living*. Or better yet, think about all the good things you'd miss about your employees if you never saw them again—and share those things before it's too late. That's exactly what the *New York Sun* did for master showman P. T. Barnum just before his death in 1891.

The editors got wind of the ailing circus impresario's complaints that the press only says good things about people after they die. So they did the unthinkable—ran Barnum's

obituary while he was still alive. The headline read: "Great And Only Barnum. He Wanted To Read His Obituary. Here It Is."

—Adapted from the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Web site

Inspiring people to take wing

World War II bomber pilot Jim Maris was a lucky guy—and he knew it. After one particularly harrowing mission, he felt an intense pain on his side and soon discovered the reason: A piece of anti-aircraft artillery was embedded in the steel plate of his flak jacket and had bruised him upon impact. Once he'd survived 25 such missions, Lt. Col. Maris even qualified for induction into the famous "Lucky Bastard Club."

But despite his many close calls, Maris never lost his love of flying—and never missed an opportunity to share his enthusiasm with someone else. As a professor in the aviation technology department at Purdue University, Maris frequently offered to take students up in his plane. Many of them embraced Maris's passion for flight, and his motivational efforts had a rippling effect.

One day after his retirement, Maris and his wife were surprised by an invitation to visit Cape Canaveral to watch a shuttle launch. The pilot and copilot were two of his former students anxious to pay their respects for the influence he'd had on their careers. Not long afterward, another of Maris's former students—an airline vice president—arranged to donate a grounded 727 to the university. A celebration was planned to mark the plane's arrival on campus, and of course, Maris was asked to attend. When the plane landed, the pilot was to present the university president with the keys to the aircraft. But instead, he walked over to Maris, handed him the keys, and thanked his former professor for introducing him to aviation. The pilot: Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon.

Jim Maris never knew he was motivating his students to conquer new worlds. He just loved what he did—and passed it along.

—Adapted from "He taught us to fly," by David Wethington, in *HeroicStories*; and "Our unforgettable mission," by James R. Maris, on B24.net

qUoTeS

Fire

“Man is so made that when anything fires his soul, impossibilities vanish.”

—Jean de la Fontaine, French poet

Accomplishment

“Where I was born and where and how I have lived is unimportant. It is what I have done with where I have been that should be of interest.”

—Georgia O’Keeffe, artist

Potential

“We focused on potential, work ethic, and ability to work well with others rather than [on a] degree. The moment you do that, you are bound to find the talent.

Open the door and they will come through it, because people are out there.”

—Andre Mendes, businessman

Ambition

“I want to put a ding in the universe.”

—Steve Jobs, entrepreneur

Perception

“It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done.”

—Virginia Woolf, in *Jacob’s Room*

Motivation

“To win, you have to get people who want more out of life than a paycheck.”

—George Allen, football coach

Fear

“The man who has ceased to fear has ceased to care.”

—Francis H. Bradley, British philosopher

Restraint

“If passion drives you, let reason hold the reins.”

—Benjamin Franklin, statesman and philosopher

Perspective

“These times of ours are serious and full of calamity, but all times are essentially alike. As soon as there is life there is danger.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, essayist

Leadership development

“I think that if I had \$10,000 to spend, I’d spend \$9,995 on developing my managers—developing their skill sets in terms of how to build a workplace where people want to stay, where they are productive, where morale is good.”

—Lynda Ford, HR consultant

Ability

“We all have ability. The difference is how we use it.”

—Stevie Wonder, singer/songwriter

Purpose

“[A]sk people ‘Why do you do what you do?’ Obviously things like money, meaning, and intellectual challenge are important, but the one I always listen for is ‘I like helping people.’ If that one is missing, I know I am speaking with a professional in trouble.”

—David Maister, author of *True Professionalism*

Leading

“Managers help people to see themselves as they are. Leaders help people to see themselves better than they are.”

—Jim Rohn, motivation expert

sTATS

Most workers stay on the job even when sick

A recent survey by ComPsych Corporation, a provider of employee assistance programs, revealed that most workers are dedicated enough to stay on the job—even when they're sick enough to stay home. Why do 77 percent of employees nix rest and recuperation? According to the survey:

- 33 percent said their workload is too overwhelming to take time off.
- 26 percent said taking time off is too risky, given the current economic uncertainty.
- 18 percent said they want their sick leave available if they need to tend their sick children.

—Adapted from “Survey: Most employees work while sick,” on the Business & Legal Reports Web site

On the other hand . . . many workers fake illness to get time off

Like the Energizer bunny, some workers keep going and going no matter how sick they feel. But according to a recent Harris poll, at least 21 percent of workers do just the opposite: They stop in their tracks when they're feeling fine.

Twenty percent of the men and 22 percent of the women who responded to the poll, which was conducted on behalf of Combe Inc.—makers of Cepacol sore throat products—said they've called in sick when they weren't. And since the survey takers suspect many respondents didn't want to admit playing hooky, the actual number of workers feigning illness to get time off may be even higher.

“People are reluctant to admit they [fake being sick] because it's admitting you're dishonest,” says Combe spokeswoman Emily Blasi. “I think the real reason they often do is because they need a ‘mental health day.’ But companies don't give mental health days, they give sick days. So people call in sick instead.”

According to another survey by CCH Inc., an Illinois-based business research company, employees took an average of 5.6 sick days in 2003—a slight decrease from 2002—and only 36 percent of those unscheduled absences truly were illness-related. The remainder were due to family problems, personal issues, stress, and an “entitlement mentality.” Absenteeism costs employers \$645 per worker each year, says CCH.

—Adapted from “1 in 5 say they've used the ‘I'm sick’ excuse to skip work,” by Richard A. Marini, in the *San Antonio Express-News* (Texas)

Managers are forced to tackle unfamiliar projects

Overseeing many projects these days? Did you know anything about the work before getting the assignment? If not, join the club. According to a national poll of senior executives by the staffing firm Accountemps, when it comes to unfamiliar projects, managers are often tossed into the water and expected to swim.

“Many leadership skills—such as the ability to motivate people and inspire innovation—are transferable,” explains Accountemps chairman Max Messmer, “and companies frequently ask experienced managers to oversee a range of initiatives, including those outside of their immediate expertise.” When asked how common it is for managers at their firms to take on projects outside their field of expertise, 7 percent characterized it as “very common,” 33 percent as “somewhat common,” 47 percent as “somewhat rare,” and 13 percent as “very rare.” In all, 40 percent of managers considered it a common occurrence.

—Adapted from “Trial by fire: Overseeing unfamiliar projects common among managers, survey shows,” on the PR Newswire

CEOs are abandoning cost-cutting in favor of growth

In IBM's “Global CEO Study 2004,” 80 percent of the worldwide corporate leaders surveyed said they're shifting their strategy from saving money to growing revenue. They'll be focusing on product development as well as branching out into new world markets, with Asia targeted as a key area for expansion.

“In the words of one Asia-based CEO: ‘The massive restructuring is behind us, costs are under control and assets are being utilized efficiently; growing the business is all that remains,’” says Grace Chopard of IBM Business Consulting. “CEOs are unanimous in their view that a new kind of leadership talent is now required, if organizations are to capture the turn in the economy.”

To achieve their objectives, 90 percent of the executives polled said that over the next five years they plan to create organizations that are more responsive—especially to customer demand.

The major barriers to change they identified: limited skills, employee capability and leadership.

—Adapted from “Poll: CEOs turn focus to growth,” by Nick Easen, on CNN.com

oDds & EnDs

Mark your calendar

If you can't remember the last time you reviewed your organization's disaster-response plan with your staff, this month offers a good opportunity to take stock. May 16–22 is Emergency Medical Services Week. In addition to reviewing your response plan, take advantage of the occasion with one or more of these activities:

- Update your employees' emergency contact numbers.
- Conduct a trial run of your emergency escape plan.
- Organize a group CPR class.
- Invite an EMS professional to offer safety tips during a brown-bag lunch.
- Hold a contest to challenge workers to design creative safety posters.
- Schedule safety training classes.
- Celebrate a positive safety record.
- Conduct a safety audit.
- Hold a fundraiser for the American Red Cross or other relief organization.

Use your imagination to come up with entertaining activities that will mark the occasion—and ensure your workers remain safe and healthy.

The cream of the crop

It's tough finding the ideal job candidate—especially when you're a small-business owner like Sam. His new assistant manager would have to wear many hats and wear them well.

Sam hired a recruiting firm to narrow down the field, then set about interviewing the final three candidates himself. Although his needs were many, his wants were few. There were only three must-haves on his list of qualifications—and he felt he'd come up with the one question that would quickly tell him whether he'd found the right person.

The first candidate came into the room. Sam glanced at the folder in front of him, noting the candidate's admirable qualifications. After the pleasantries, Sam cut to the chase: "How much is two and two?"

Caught off-guard, the candidate hastily replied, "Twenty-two."

Sam looked at the first item on his list of must-haves: "quick thinker."

Next!

The second candidate also had good credentials and a positive demeanor. Again, Sam asked his question: "How much is two and two?"

Without wasting a nanosecond, the candidate pulled out a calculator. "Between 3.999 and 4.001."

This one's a quick thinker, Sam thought, then looked at his second must-have: "common sense."

Next!

When the final candidate entered, Sam wasted no time on chitchat. "How much is two and two?" he demanded.

"How much do you want it to be?"

Sam looked at the last of his three must-haves: "knows who's boss."

"Welcome to the company," he smiled.

—Adapted from "True tales from the workplace," in *Training & Development*

Odd jobs

In the last two issues of *Motivational Manager*, we've asked you to tell us about the "odd jobs" you've held in your career. Reader Ken Gullette shares his experience—certainly a standout example of a clueless, bad boss:

In 1981, I was working at a TV station. I wrote, produced and anchored the local news inserts during the *Today Show*. At 8:30 a.m., after my last local newscast, I went out with a videographer and covered a story, usually preparing it for the 6:00 news. I would rush back to the station and co-anchor the noon newscast. Most days, the assignment editor would send me back out in the afternoon to cover a second story for the 6:00 news. I was putting in 13-hour days and even though I loved my job, at the tender age of 27 I was burning out. Eventually, the news director left for another station and the general manager held a newsroom meeting, urging the staff to come to him with any problems.

"I have an open-door policy," he said proudly.

So I made an appointment and went to see him. I outlined my day, how I arrived at the station at 5:30 a.m. and often was working at 6:00 p.m. I asked him if it was possible to cut back and avoid doing a second story for the 6:00 news.

"Ken, I used to think of you as a professional employee," he said. "But now it seems that you're nothing but a clock-watcher."

I told him that I was sorry he felt that way, stood up, and left his office. Within a year I had a new job in Cincinnati.

Ken Gullette, Director—Media Relations, ACT

Overcome speaking jitters with these tips

We've all seen capable, confident Dr. Jekylls who, when thrust behind a podium, turn into babbling Mr. Hydes. They sweat, shake, stammer, and stumble—turning a simple presentation into an exercise in agony. If the description strikes a little too close to home, try to take some of the terror out of your next presentation by:

- **Empathizing with the audience.** Your fears are egocentric: What if *I* forget my material? What if *I* misquote the data? What if *I* can't answer a question? What if *I* make a fool of myself? Quell those fears by focusing on the audience instead of yourself. Think about their needs and what you can do to make sure those needs are met.
- **Organizing your material.** Like any good book, a presentation should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Often speakers start out okay, then start to ramble because they've failed to create a satisfactory ending to their story.

- **Looking for weaknesses.** After you've collected your data, play devil's advocate. Punch holes in your argument, look for missing links in your conclusions. Fill in the blanks to ensure you're not hit with a question you can't answer.
- **Speaking from the heart.** Don't let yourself get sucked into making presentations touting projects or theories you don't actually support. When you truly believe in what you're saying, you'll bring passion to the presentation. The audience will feel that energy and mirror it back to you, giving you silent encouragement to keep going. Before you realize it, you'll be fully focused on swaying opinion—rather than avoiding embarrassment. —Adapted from “The naked truth about public speaking,” by Judith Lindenberger, on CareerJournal.com

Traveling on business? Here's how to avoid security hassles

Getting through airport security isn't easy these days—thank goodness. To move things along:

1. **Go barefoot.** No one expects you to travel shoeless, but wear shoes that are easy to remove, and place them in the bin before passing through the metal detectors. (Even sandals and tennis shoes contain metal parts.) Hand over your zippered jacket, coins, keys, jewelry, pagers, cell phone, and laptop bag, too. Otherwise, you'll trigger the alarm and be held back for a more thorough inspection.
2. **Go thirsty.** If you pick up a cup of java or carry bottled water or soft drinks aboard, expect security officers to ask you to open each and take a sip.
3. **Go unarmed.** This should go without saying, but if you plan to take a

weapon aboard—and this includes your tweezers as well as the tiny bottle of pepper spray that looks like a perfume atomizer—leave it in your checked baggage. Otherwise, you'll leave it behind after it's been confiscated.

4. **Go chipless.** That chip on your shoulder—lose it. For most travelers, *security checks should not be taken personally*. Set off the alarms, you'll be pulled aside. Travel internationally, your bags will be inspected (don't carry anything you wouldn't want others to see). And *anyone* could be chosen at random and searched. The more time you spend arguing, the longer it takes.

—Adapted from “Airport security: A guide to getting through security quickly,” by Lisa Bialecki, on About.com

Make a game of management training

Different situations require different management approaches. Try this game to help workers understand when it's appropriate to be bureaucratic (rule focused), democratic (team oriented), or laissez-faire (empowering):

1. **Divide your staff into two teams,** and give the first player on each team a buzzer.
2. **Describe a workplace scenario—** say, “operating dangerous machinery.” The first player to hit the buzzer must name the appropriate style for that scenario (bureaucratic) and explain *why* (proper procedures ensure safety). If the player is wrong on either count, the other team's player may answer. Scenarios might include:

- *Writing a marketing plan.* Style: Democratic. Reason: Teams can brainstorm ideas.
- *Selling widgets in a large territory.* Style: Laissez-faire. Reason: Off-site workers have limited supervision.
- *Disciplining insubordinate workers.* Style: Bureaucratic. Reason: Upholding policies avoids litigation.

Score one point per correct answer, and award prizes to the winning team.

—Adapted from the PageWise Web site

Faux pas? Go for the quick fix

You've misstated a fact at a meeting, forgotten the name of your regional director, spilled cocktail sauce on your shirt at a VIP dinner. *Egads! What to do now?* Apologize. Even those most schooled in the social graces goof up now and then. When your turn comes, don't pretend the misstep never occurred, but don't engage in a public self-flogging either. Making a Big Deal out of a minor incident can be more embarrassing for all than the incident itself. Offer sincere regrets—then change the subject.

—Adapted from “Business etiquette you really need to know,” by Susan Bryant, on Monster.com

Ready résumés keep workers revved

Here's an interesting way to motivate workers: Tell them to update their résumés. Sears, Roebuck and Co. retains IT talent by encouraging workers to move from job to job—within the organization. “I can unilaterally say that 100 percent of our staff will work on what they consider to be a hot project in their career at Sears,” says Steve Junk, vice president of online IT. The company has even set up a process allowing workers to post the closing dates of their projects so managers have a heads-up on who's going to be available.

—Adapted from “Walking in many shoes,” by Mary Brandel, on the Computerworld Web site

Consider these language options

You may wear glasses, but it's unlikely that people routinely refer to you as “the nearsighted manager.” So don't similarly define others who have disabilities. Rather than saying someone is “disabled,” “crippled,” “a victim,” “a sufferer,” “deformed,” and so forth, use the phrase “person with a disability” or “person who has a disability.” And don't say one employee is “disabled” but another is “normal.” If you need to make the distinction, simply say one has a disability and the other does not.

—Adapted from the Web site of the National Research Council of Canada

Set the clock for productivity

The productivity of your meetings may have as much to do with the timing of them as with the people involved. For instance, if you schedule meetings immediately after lunch, your participants may be half asleep—especially if they've eaten a large meal, laden with carbs. Scheduling too close to quitting time is another no-no. The most productive time for meetings? Just before lunch—around 11 a.m.

—Adapted from “How to have successful meetings,” by Dave Wiggins, on the CED Magazine Web site

Make a memorable impression with these networking pointers

You've been invited to an industry mixer and want to make an impression on potential career contacts. But take care that the impression is positive. Follow these guidelines:

- **Wait for a signal.** Don't walk up to a group of strangers and start chatting. Ease into the circle and wait for a verbal or nonverbal cue that you're being included. Then, if some in the group are new to you, introduce yourself and shake hands before entering the conversation.
- **Avoid touchy subjects.** Steer clear of controversial or deeply personal topics such as politics, religion, gender, race or ethnicity, sexuality (or your sexual escapades), gossip, personal crises or finances, and office politics.
- **Spread your attention.** Other guests are also hoping to make important contacts, so don't corner them for 20 or 30 minutes. If you find someone

particularly engrossing, invite that individual to lunch at a later date, shake hands, excuse yourself, and move on.

- **Read the cards.** When someone hands you a business card, take a second to read it and comment on the title or company. Don't write on the card unless the giver wants to include additional information (say, an e-mail address or home telephone number).
- **Make a discreet exit.** When leaving, don't draw attention to yourself. If possible, thank the host and say something positive about the event. If the host isn't available, telephone your thanks the next day or send a thank-you note.

—Adapted from “Avoid behaviours that could label you as a ‘cocktail weenie,’” by the Etiquette Ladies, on the Homemakers.com Web site

When ‘procrastinating’ becomes your business strategy, you need help

If your favorite word is *later*, your inbox is probably pretty full. By continually putting things off, you increase the chance that something will slip through the cracks—or that you'll burn out from playing catch-up. Beat procrastination by adopting these get-it-done strategies:

1. **Recognize your problem.** Stop rationalizing! Unless you've taken on an unreasonable workload, continually missing deadlines, forgetting obligations, and feeling overwhelmed because you're always behind are signs that you have a procrastination problem.
2. **Discover your motivators.** What do you gain by putting things off? How does that compare to what you gain by working ahead? Focus on the rewards of doing it now: freedom to enjoy leisure or accept other commitments, time to do the job right

the first time, relief from the pressure of having to scramble at the last minute, the increased self-esteem that comes from taking control of your life.

3. **Conduct a self-analysis.** You're not lazy, so why put things off? Because the chores are unpleasant, or is there a deeper reason? Perhaps you fear you're not equal to the task. Or could it be that you always feel compelled to do things *perfectly*, making them more difficult than they are. Or maybe you're a dreamer, always thinking about the big things you wish you were doing instead of concentrating on the here and now. Once you learn why you procrastinate, you can form a strategy to overcome the impulse.

—Adapted from “The time has come . . . Just DO IT!” by Kathy Paauw, on the Paauperfully Organized Web site

Follow these clues to build team cohesiveness

People love a good puzzle—especially with a prize at stake. That’s one reason treasure hunts are popular group activities. And with modification, they can also become useful management tools for building stronger teams. Here’s how to begin:

- **Determine your objective.** Because it’s an intellectual challenge, a treasure hunt can be a perfect exercise for learning how individuals function within a team. You can identify natural leaders, lateral thinkers, who’s comfortable taking a supporting role—and who has trouble working in tandem with others.
- **Choose a prize.** Most people will rise to the thrill of the hunt, but that doesn’t mean you should skimp on the treasure. Come up with something that offers value to all.
- **Map your strategy.** Find a creative place to hide your treasure, then devise a series of intriguing clues to the location. Make your clues fair but challenging enough that one person alone couldn’t solve them. Consider these three categories:

1. **Trivia.** Combine details from historical events, song lyrics,

television programs, etc., so hunters must search their collective memories.

2. **Coordinated action.** Require players to synchronize their actions (four people stand in the center of the room, walk three paces out, turn left, and so on).
 3. **Codes.** Substitute alphanumeric codes for words so your treasure hunters must brainstorming a solution.
- **Plan some surprises.** In a treasure hunt, all participants must follow the same map or read the same list of clues—which means they’ll go where you send them. That gives you the opportunity to plan a few surprises. For instance, when your hunters arrive at one of their interim destinations, they might find refreshments to enjoy or a maze to traverse. How individuals react will offer clues about their ability to shift gears and whether they’re more motivated by tangible rewards or new challenges. —Adapted from “‘Getting a clue’ with teambuilding treasure hunts,” by David Blum, on Teambuildinginc.com

ONE-MINUTE IDEAS

Avoid unhealthy competition

Healthy competition exists when two fairly matched individuals, or groups of individuals, vie for the same prize. However, workplace competitions can quickly undermine morale if you begin unfavorably comparing workers out of some misguided attempt to motivate them. Praise both efforts, then recognize and reward superior achievement—*without* resorting to win-lose rhetoric. Never tear down one employee to build up another.

—Adapted from “Criticizing a project team member’s performance,” by Claudine E. Paris, on the Project Manager Training Web site

Give workers what they need

Many people fear that asking for help makes them look weak or incompetent. So they muddle through without it—and fail to achieve their full potential. Take misplaced pride out of the mix by asking this question each time you meet with workers to discuss their progress: *How can I help you succeed?* And don’t give up until you get an answer.

—Adapted from the Hard@Work Web site

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Try this exercise to explain corporate culture

What's your organization all about? Not sure? Gee, it would be nice to have one of those books: *Our Company for Dummies* or *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Our Business*. You can—if you and your employees write it. Begin a project to create a humorous guide to life at your place of business. You can have a contest to see who comes up with the best title (*for Dummies* and *Complete Idiot's Guide* are taken). Then brainstorm what you want to include. Put together an outline and come up with funny chapter heads. You can even insert clip art. It's an exercise that's bound to inspire a few laughs—and perhaps some interesting revelations about how workers view your organization. —Adapted from the Institute for Management Excellence Web site

Use this childhood activity to relieve adult stress

Feeling overwhelmed? Believe it or not, you and your staff may find serenity by taking up the childhood art of coloring.

The human brain functions much like a computer, which is less responsive when multiple programs are running in the background. When the inner dialogue that runs through our brains as we go through daily tasks gets out of control, we feel scattered and confused. Apparently the childhood activity of coloring engages the mind in a way that calms those inner voices, allowing us to consciously focus on one idea at a time. Researchers have found it particularly soothing to color mandala—ritualistic geometric designs symbolizing the wholeness of the universe.

For more information on coloring therapy—as well as mandalas you can purchase and download for your own coloring activities—visit the Coloring Therapy Web site at www.coloringtherapy.com. —Adapted from “Relaxation sparker: Color me calm,” in *Coaching Toys*

Consider these plusses and minuses when hiring motivational speakers

Whether you're planning a workshop or seminar, or just looking for a way to rev up your staff, chances are you've considered hiring an outside motivator. Great idea—as long as you find a person who fits your bill. Begin by asking these four questions:

- 1. What do you need?** What must you achieve to justify the cost of this hire?
- 2. What do you want?** What extra benefits might you hope to derive from this presentation?
- 3. What can you afford to spend?** Tony Robbins might be a great choice for your group—but not if you can't meet his price.
- 4. What can you get?** Who are the affordable speakers in your area?

Once you know what you're looking for, carefully consider these choices:

- **Start-up speakers.** Everyone has to start somewhere—even motivational speakers. On the plus side, those who are just getting their feet wet may charge a rock-bottom price or even agree to address your group in exchange for expenses and the opportunity to use you as a reference. On the minus side, they lack experience,

probably don't have very sophisticated presentation materials, and may find it difficult to cope with the unexpected—such as a negative audience reaction or challenging questions.

- **Expert authorities.** These people are known for their expertise in a single area. On the plus side, of course, they know their subjects inside out. On the minus side, they're likely to have rigid ideas that may not be compatible with your strategies.
- **Big names.** Like Tony Robbins and Zig Ziglar, these are people with instant name recognition and books or tapes to sell. On the plus side, they earned their reputations and will offer a dynamic presentation. On the minus side, the bigger they are, the more they cost and the harder they are to book. But another plus: Chances are they'll be giving a seminar in your area that's open to the public—allowing you to fire up your staff for the price of a few tickets.

—Adapted from “Selecting a speaker: Have them focus on your effort, not your errors,” by Joni Daniels, on the CEO Refresher Web site

Make good use of the grapevine when trying to scale the ladder

I bet you're wondering how I knew . . . begins the classic Motown hit “I Heard It Through the Grapevine.” Taking advantage of unofficial lines of communication has kept many a savvy manager in the loop—and on the upward climb. Use these tips to get the most reliable info:

- **Develop your sources.** Determine who has access to the information you need and cultivate those relationships.
- **Learn to share.** Never *never* reveal confidential information. But learn to trade less sensitive information when you need to.

- **Keep a close watch.** Make note of the people with whom your employees and colleagues frequently associate so you'll have some idea how reliable the information they pass on might be.
- **Stick to the facts.** Avoid engaging in professional speculation or personal gossip that could be repeated—and attributed to you.

—Adapted from “Office politics: Are you a naysayer?” by Susan RoAne, on the RoAne Group Web site