



TenStep Supplemental Paper

10 March 2005

Interactive Work Environment!

Low employee productivity, missing deadlines, irresponsible attitudes and poor customer service are all indicators of a sure path to failure. They are also some of the important HR issues for which organizations are trying to find solutions. Though organizational success is most often attributed to employee performance, the failure of employee performance reflected as low productivity, missing deadlines, and poor customer service cannot always be attributed to an employee's shortcomings. It often indicates leadership deficiencies.

To overcome these employee issues, organizations have introduced various techniques like TQM, Quality circles, management workshops, and meetings to improve employee efficiency. The underlying problem is interpersonal relationships, which, though a key to employee efficiency, are often neglected. High quality interpersonal relationships help organizations in three important ways:

Promotion of creativity and innovation. The three elements of innovation - new information, new applications and new perspectives - are nurtured only with positive interpersonal interactions. The positive interactions of employees from different departments give rise to new insights and fresh perspectives. The collective knowledge acquired by sharing information acts as a catalyst to the creativity and innovation of employees on the job.

Better teamwork. Positive interpersonal interactions help teams to perform well and produce quality outputs. A team is an amalgamation of individual employees. Its success therefore depends on how well these members coordinate and cooperate with each other to consolidate their work and give it a final shape.

Better customer service. Creativity, innovation and good teamwork together contribute to better customer service. Well-informed employees are generally not only ready to solve customer problems, but also come up with more creative solutions. This positive work culture gets transmitted to the customers as well.

Fostering a positive interactive work environment

Achieving a positive interactive work environment requires commitment and serious efforts from top management. Below are a few suggestions:

Develop a shared value system. In any organization, employees seek an environment that is proactive, positive, empathetic and professional. These are values that bind employees together and make them feel like a family. Management should take care to develop a value-centered group mission statement based on the shared values of all the employees. This will help form a common purpose and direction for the teams in the organization.

Implement the value system developed. The group mission statement that is developed needs to be monitored to see how well the group members understand it and comply with



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it. Regular workshop and training sessions help the team members accomplish their value-centered goals. These workshops should be as interactive as possible so they can come up with practical solutions to their problems and concerns.

Live the value system with top-down commitment. If top management shows no commitment towards building a positive interactive work environment, employees will not be motivated to make the effort either. Managers have to be made accountable for embedding the culture in their teams. This will not only motivate the managers to take the mission seriously, but it will also help employees develop a positive attitude towards the initiative.

Reward the deserved. Creating a value-centered positive culture requires every employee's commitment, and hence any contribution towards the initiative should be publicly rewarded. Also, corrective actions should be taken against those who do not participate in the initiative.

Organizations that wish to create a positive interactive work environment should realize that it is a long-term initiative with long lasting returns; therefore, it requires long-term commitment (in addition to financial resources) as an investment.