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This week's Food for Thought is an article that I believe, based on my recent work with several clients, is quite timely. Change faces all of us everyday - especially at work. The way a company and its leadership manages that change is the key to their success. I hope you find value in these thoughts!

Your Most Valuable Asset

By Scott R. Playfair, President, P Squared Consulting

Did you know:

- 80% of employees could perform significantly better if they wanted to?
- 70% of employees are less motivated today than they used to be?
- 50% of employees only put enough effort into their work to keep their job?

As a business leader, I would guess you face the same challenges as the many leaders I speak with each week being bombarded by a constant state of change as a matter of survival. This presents you, as a leader in your company, with the ever-present concern of losing focus on what really makes your business successful - your people.

Ask any successful business leader today what the key to organizational success is and you will likely hear - a motivated, productive and dedicated workforce. But as change impacts your employees in both their personal and professional lives, the assumption that they will just naturally be OK can be a serious mistake. If you do not understand what your employees need, the result can be profound. Morale and productivity can decline. The following presents some thoughts you should consider to improve your organization.

Personal Ownership

People are intimately aware of their roles and responsibilities in the organization. They understand their work processes better than anyone else could. When employees are empowered to manage and improve those processes, they will always step up to the plate and do the right thing. The critical factor is that employees are given the authority to manage their jobs. With authority comes immense personal responsibility to perform.

After a recent P Squared goal setting project, a comment was made about the value of the process... *"Each department was unified and given focus. Department employees identified their own key issues, set their own goals and better understood who does what. This created group ownership of goals."*

The Synergy of Teams

A team-based environment promotes mutual support and respect among all individuals in an organization. Employees that function well as a team are capable of higher productivity and high quality outputs. A positive interpersonal environment encourages people to share information and to get involved in areas that are not necessarily within their immediate job scope. Employees contribute because they want to be part of the group. It is through these contributions that progressive productivity improvements are possible.

A winning team supports and encourages all team members to be the best they can be. Being part of the team creates a feeling of confidence and security. Employees enter the performance "zone". They are on the road to exceptional productivity. In addition, tremendous *synergy* is created that can only be achieved through teams. A high performance culture is formed that ensures sustained competitive advantage.

From the perspective of a company assisted by P Squared to place a high standard on team performance, one employee said... *"The process provided an environment that built a stronger team working toward common goals. Getting to know and interact with team members created a foundation and direction that integrated the team."*

Communicating the Company Vision for the Future

Shared goals bring people together. Most employees would agree that working toward a proactive, positive, professional workplace is a worthy quest. When management clearly communicates the company's goals and objectives, divisions and departments can tie together as teams to supporting the company's vision. Further, individual employees can generate supporting goals. As a result, corporate goals are effectively cascaded down through all levels of the organization.

Employees then feel that by achieving their individual objectives, they are directly contributing to the success of the organization. Understanding their contribution reinforces the employees' sense of wholeness and meaning.

Recently heard at a P Squared client site, an employee reinforced this concept by saying, *"I have a better understanding of the company's key goals and the big picture. I know how I fit in and how I can make a difference. I understand why I am important to the company; I am proud that I have a positive impact on the future of my company."*

So if you, as a manager, scratch your head and wonder what it is about your employees that causes them to be unproductive or unmotivated, the solution is at your finger tips. Employees become part of the team when you make them feel ownership and a critical part of the future of the company. And organizations can't accomplish this until you make the effort to bring everyone together, communicate the company vision and empower your employees by utilizing teams.

For organizations that develop a positive interpersonal environment, the benefits for morale and productivity are clear. However, none of this is possible until the organization realizes that employees are the only true **Competitive Advantage!**