



Energizing the Troops

You can do so using lessons from younger days

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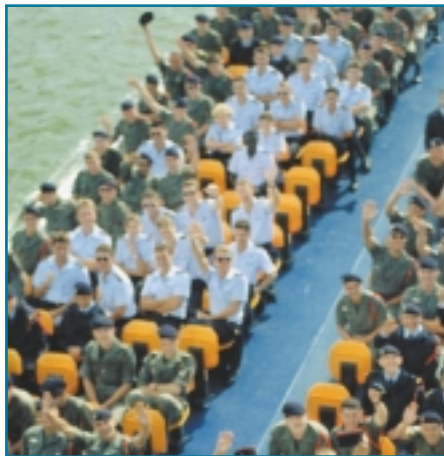
The trouble we have energizing people! It can be an endless struggle — getting them to buy in, sign on and invest. So, what is the trick to engaging the ranks? It is not as tough as we think. You have already learned the lessons from your parents, your elementary school teachers and others you have encountered along the way. This article covers the five lessons that you should never forget. These lessons will help you light fires all over the company.

(1) You learned the basics at home (provided your family was not too dysfunctional).

Those lessons, sharing, caring and all that other warm fuzzy stuff — they really matter. Remembering birthdays, celebrating the successes of others and, of course, good manners — those are all of the things that your mother taught you. Use those same basic skills in the workplace. Be sure that you acknowledge your employees' individuality and their special events. Use little gestures to connect on a human level. Believe me, these small acts of kindness will go a long way to creating loyalty and commitment. Don't forget to use your best manners with employees; after all, the success of the dealership is contingent upon their efforts.

(2) Remember grade school.

Yes, remember grade school. The teachers were nice. They spoke to you with respect and kindness. They gave you snacks and let you rest. They helped you find what you excelled at and then encouraged you to do your best. These are the exact tactics you have to use with your managers and staff. Be kind and human. Be respectful. Help them discover their talents by cross-training them and allowing them to have different experiences in the dealership. Encourage continued success



by recognizing progress. Make sure to plan celebrations that acknowledge both the effort and the victories.

(3) Don't forget high school.

Yes, those lessons apply, too. Subjects got more difficult. Work got more challenging. There were more distractions. But, with the complexity came more confidence and, eventually, more competence. The same applies in the workplace. As people master the basic competencies, we owe it to them to present challenges that enable them to grow. And, we have to acknowledge inevitable workplace distractions — the politics, the pressures and the people. These distractions can all impede productivity unless we build in valves that allow staff to decompress. This means using dialogue, interesting assignments and a little levity to make the workplace more interesting. This also means that it is time to facilitate mentoring in the dealership. Create an environment where people can learn from one another. This takes weight off of the principal and it builds stronger relationships throughout the organization.

(4) And, you will recall, there was the independence of college.

The freedom to explore, probe and indulge intellectual curiosity — those were the best parts of the collegiate experience. Minimal supervision, coupled with endless opportunities to make new connections and forge new bonds, was exhilarating. That's what we have to provide in the dealership, too. Employees need encouragement to continuously explore new products, services and technologies. As the principal, you are required to allow enough freedom to promote growth. Encourage every level of management and staff to delve into their areas of interest related to the work. Then, get them to share what they learned with the entire organization. This type of peer-to-peer learning builds a valuable knowledge bank in the company.

(5) Graduation day will come.

Just as we matriculated in school, so must we matriculate in the world of work. There is a huge world beyond the dealership. There are vendors, suppliers, even larger dealerships and other industries to conquer. The skills people learn in your organization are transferable. Allow — in fact — urge them to make the transfer. Don't impose limitations on your people. If they have a lot of talent, make sure they learn more about the broader industry. Send people to industry conventions, seminars and other events. This will give the best and the brightest more exposure. That broad exposure is what will take their careers to the next level. ■

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