

Ask SCORE

MOTIVATION MATTERS IN GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR EMPLOYEES

One of the first and most important lessons an entrepreneur learns is that employees really are a small business's most important resource. In fact, the business literally cannot succeed without them. Their talent, skills, and effort truly add value to your products or services, allowing you to focus on the planning and creative issues that will move your business forward.

Unlike your equipment, computers, and other resources, however, you can't simply turn employees on and off for business hours. All employees need a clear understanding of their role in your business and how it can grow, plus the motivation to achieve and, even better, exceed those expectations.

That's why you, as the business owner, also hold the title of "Chief Communicator and Motivator."

It's important to have direct contact to make your message clear. Some owners try to save time and manage by email. That works only to a point. But direct contact builds trust and rapport.

Establish your business "mantra" and keep repeating it. Don't assume that everyone involved in the business understands and buys into the mission as you do. After all, you're the one who created it, not them. They haven't lived and breathed every detail as you have.

Here's one simple step to make certain you communicate clearly. Instead of asking if an employee understood your instructions, ask what specific steps the person will take to complete the task. That way you can be absolutely certain

they not only understood, but also plan to complete the assignment in an appropriate way.

Avoid constantly criticizing employees. That hurts morale and can make people less motivated. If you highlight the positive and correct mistakes without getting personal, employees are more likely to deliver what you want.

While a good manager is also visible, it's important to not make it appear that you are micromanaging. A quick chat about work and non-work issues during a stroll through your business is all the positive reinforcement is all most employees need. They'll feel more comfortable about coming to you with questions, concerns, or suggestions. Augment the informality with individual and group meetings to share information and updates, brainstorm ideas, and simply get to know each other. Such interaction will not only help re-energize your staff, but the boss as well!

To learn more about human resources issues facing your small business, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business." SCORE is a nonprofit organization of more than 10,500 volunteer business counselors who provide free, confidential business counseling and training workshops to small business owners. Call 610.327.2673 for the Pottstown SCORE office, or visit on the web at www.pottstownscore.org.

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To learn more about Hobart's Run and how we welcome local business development, email **Twila Fisher**, Director of Community and Economic Development, at twila@hobartsrunpottstown.org or call 610-780-6324.

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