

WORKING OVERTIME ON MORALE

By eliminating 'demotivators,' you can improve employee morale and production during the long weeks of spring and summer.

by E.T. Wandtke

The long, busy hours of spring are bound to put additional pressure on your employees. For them to remain motivated and maintain high morale, management needs to introduce incentives so their employees can work hard yet feel good about themselves and their work.

Management tends to overlook the need to introduce motivational incentives for employees, even though they're a simple, effective way to improve morale among workers who are working long hours under high pressure conditions.

An easy, effective first step is to allow employees to think for themselves. Let them make the field decisions that you usually made in the past.

While you're at it, get rid of the rules or management techniques that act as constraints to innovative or creative thinking by your employees. Employees are not robots, so don't treat them as if their sole purpose is to produce. Let them think while they work on a customer's property.

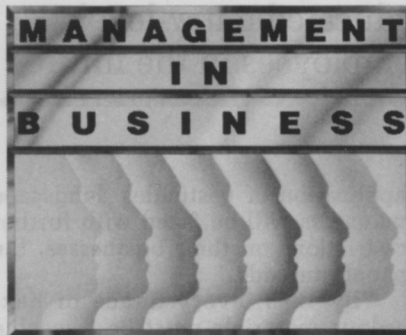
Many "demotivators" exist in green industry companies. Finding and getting rid of them will help improve employee morale this spring.

Exactly what are these "demotivators"?

Decisions that are singularly beneficial. Avoid making decisions that are for the benefit of only one employee or appear to benefit the owner of the company.

Often the urgency of problems in spring result in management making decisions that may be divisive to the company. For example, pressure to increase spring production may result in employees' only concern being to get the job done quickly—often with little regard to the quality of their work.

Stressing individual effort. Ours is a team business. Failure to promote team thinking generally results in your employees approaching their work with a one-on-one attitude. You lose the feeling that you're a part of



the company.

A lack of team attitude develops if and when you make decisions that seem inconsistent with the facts or previous decisions. Another sign is a sloppy, unkempt office area. This careless attitude about the appearance of the work area often carries over into the employees' attitude about customer service.

Spring is the time to change this approach to your workforce. Bring them together and re-establish the team concept. Have a pizza party or similar social event and let your employees know that you want them to work together as a team. Remind them that the uniform they wear is of your company and, as such, they are looked at by the community as a team.

Playing favorites. By singling out one or two individuals who seem to be carrying the company, you're creating a divisive environment. A few of your employees appear to be doing all of the work while other employees appear to be under-producing.

Eliminating these divisive actions will go a long way to improving the team attitude of your employees.

Manager passing of the buck. What happens when a supervisor voices his objections to your instructions in front of employees? Demotivation. Monitor managers to see if this condition exists. If it does, it must be corrected in order to remotivate your

employees and rekindle in them a belief in the company.

Lack of employee communication. Spring often means employee turnover, and a lack of training of the new hires frequently exists. Having a workforce that is under-trained and not sure of its job frequently leads to employee frustration.

Meet with your employees during the early summer months and be certain they understand what you expect of them. This will go a long way toward relieving employees' anxiety.

Remote management. Another area of frustration and demotivation of employees is when a company is forced to deal with absentee owners. If you own a lawn care company but have not been actively involved with it, take the time to visit the company and introduce yourself to employees.

Individuals who work for absentee owners are often uncertain of their future opportunities and the direction of the company. Meeting the brains behind the operations will improve their job motivation.

Lack of employee recognition. If you do not have some method of recognizing outstanding employee performance, now is the time to do it. When an employee sees their name on a plaque, receives a day off, or gets a preferred parking place for a period of time, they'll strive for a higher level of performance.

Give your employees the opportunity to shine among their peers.

Owners who notice a declining attitude of their employees during the spring need to determine what demotivators exist within their company. With work demands high and the hours long, demotivators are out there lowering employee morale.

By reinforcing the team concept and paying attention to personnel's needs, you can remotivate and encourage your employees, while increasing your company's profitability. **LM**