



# MOTIVATION: key to PRODUCTIVITY



**Helms: 'Other people may be 100% responsible for what they do to you. But you are 100% responsible for the way you react.'**

■ You can put a carrot in front of employees and lure them. You can take a stick and whomp their behind. But that's not motivation, according to Larry Helms of Western Training Systems, Medford, Ore.

"You can't motivate anyone to do what they don't want to do," Helms told an Associated Landscape Contractors of America audience at its annual conference last year. "You've got to know the button to push. Just because you are stimulated in a certain way doesn't mean everyone else is stimulated by the same things."

The more team building you can do, the more productive your employees will be, Helms said. He cited the six keys to motivation:

**1) Ask for it.** Describe how the job is being done now, and how you want it to be. Then ask the employee to do it that way.

**2) Use lots of positive reinforcement** and personalize it. Don't take acceptable work for granted. Praise them every time they improve. Find out what works with each of your people and use it.

**3) Build relationships.** You shouldn't be buddy-buddy, but treat people like real, live human beings. They'll respond best when you show you respect their individuality and trust their intentions.

**4) Understand your employees' point of view.** Listen to your people and ask for their opinion before giving directions or offering advice. Listen first, and listen with an open mind.

**5) Model the behavior you want to get back.** Show employees by your actions that the job matters, that quality is important, and deadlines are real.

**6) Refuse to accept poor performance.** When you demonstrate that standards matter, that, in itself, is motivational.

When asked what makes them happier and most productive on the job, most employees say, first and foremost, appreciation for their efforts. (Other factors, in order of importance, are: "being in on things," help on personal problems, job security, high wages, interesting work, promotion, and loyalty of supervisor.)

Thus, recognition plays perhaps the most important role in motivating employees. It makes people "feel like they're winners," Helms observes.

He says that you, as a manager, should recognize individuals as well as groups, people as well as achievements. The recognition should be sincere, timely and individualized.

**Job loading**—Another key is to avoid "vertical job loading," the practice of giving one employee the same type of job all

*"If you rule with an iron fist, you get either malicious obedience or gleeful insubordination," this expert says.*

## THE MOST IMPORTANT WORDS

*The six most important words:  
"I admit I made a mistake."*

*The five most important words:  
"You did a good job."*

*The four most important words:  
"What is your opinion?"*

*The three most important words:  
"Will you please...?"*

*The two most important words:  
"Thank you."*

*The most important word:  
"We"*

*The least important word:  
"I"*

the time.

"The more 'vertical job loading,' the less satisfaction, productivity and stability," Helms notes. "Give the employees some variety."

He also suggests that you improve team effectiveness through regular staff meetings, regular supervisory meetings, idea boxes and a regular, updated exam policy.

Finally, a positive mental attitude on the part of the manager will likely rub off on employees, Helms concludes. "Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve."

—Jerry Roche

### WHY PEOPLE QUIT:

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Limited advancement opportunities..... | 47% |
| Lack of recognition.....               | 26% |
| Unhappiness with management.....       | 15% |
| Boredom.....                           | 6%  |
| Inadequate salary.....                 | 6%  |