

Tune-ups boost employees' worth

People are one of the few assets that become more valuable with time.

by Vic Osteen

■ You would not invest in an expensive piece of equipment and not do regular maintenance on it. Most pieces of equipment come with a recommended maintenance schedule of service. It tells how and when to check fluid levels, replace worn parts, inspect and adjust components. It ensures that you get the best out of the piece of equipment.

This is also what should be done with our employees. We need to regularly spend time with them, not just when they become complacent or burned out.

Meeting with employees to go over an annual performance review isn't enough. We need to do preventive maintenance on them to keep them performing effectively and efficiently. We must regularly check their performance, provide information, redefine goals and objectives, and be sure that they are running like a well-oiled machine.

Something as simple as having a brief conversation with each employee on a regular basis may be enough. I know of one manager who goes through his desk calendar, puts a person's name on each day, then makes the effort to stop by and visit with that person, or spend some time with him or her.

This would certainly be more beneficial than complaining that people don't how to work any more. Or that people don't want to work any more. Or that people haven't been taught how to work. These are complaints I'm hearing way too often now.

The workforce and the employee have changed in the past two decades. We as employers and managers must recognize these changes and make adjustments in the way we think and act.

The basic image of employment for today's worker has changed dramatically. There is no longer such a thing as job security or a long-term commitment from the company due to mergers, downsizing, and new technologies. Employees are reacting to this realization, and many live in fear that they will be tossed out just as

quickly as yesterday's computer.

On the other hand, without employees, work would not or could not take place. Employers must recognize the value of employees and people in general while seeking to run a profitable business.

People are one of the few assets that become more valuable with time. Through their ever-increasing ability to gain knowledge, store information, and formulate ideas and concepts, employees, unlike most other assets, actually appreciate in value rather than depreciate.

Managers need to develop an "employee maintenance schedule" which also includes employee training—not only technical, but personal development training as well. In order to build a better workforce, we need to build better people. Training is an opportunity for the employee to check actions and attitudes, make adjustments, and, in many cases, recharge their batteries.

It is obvious that the paycheck is no longer a strong motivator for most employees after their basic needs are met. Even million dollar baseball players want more. I have found that most people want two things from any employer: respect and appreciation. These are manifested in several ways, such as being part of a team, knowing what is going on, having interesting work, and having a manager who cares about employees as people.

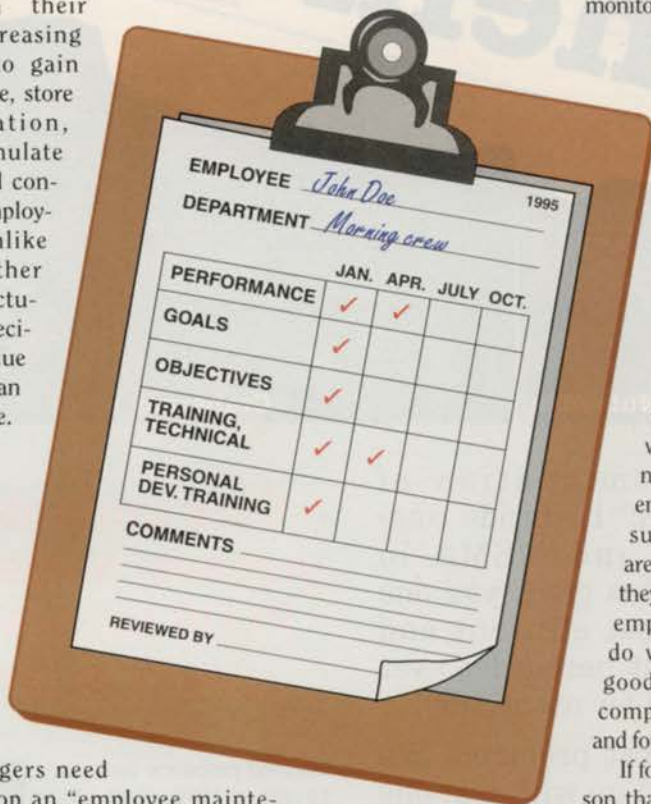
All of these are very easy to provide if

managers take the time and effort to do so. In fact, Peter Drucker, the father of modern management in the United States, says that, "When you become a manager, you give up honest work and should spend all of your time making sure that the employee can get his work done."

I recommend that you spend some time developing a system that will regularly monitor the effective-

ness and efficiency of each employee. It should include respect and appreciation through care and training. Start today to establish a method which will meet the needs of your employees to be sure that they are performing as they should. Most employees really do want to do a good job for the company, for you, and for themselves.

If for no other reason than financial, it is best to maintain and keep good employees. It is estimated that the cost of replacing an employee is pricey, one third of his or her annual salary. □



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