



WORKINGSMARTER

JIM PALUCH

The author is president of JP Horizons Inc. Visit www.jp horizons.com.

Take time to enjoy the good stuff

When is the last time you really had a celebration at your company? When was the last time you drew attention to a mistake?

As you ponder those two questions, you may realize we often overlook the wins and focus in on the losses. Companies that are Working Smarter have trained themselves to celebrate improvements.

Establish a team challenge

A challenge becomes more than a well-defined goal by giving direction and focus for a team or individual — and at the same time allows the freedom to work on getting better as opposed to simply reaching a destination.

Sales goals, for example, are essential to success, but set them as a measurement to support the challenge of improving the company's sales overall. A sales *goal* could be to achieve \$100,000 in sales for the month of June, but a sales *challenge* could be to improve June's sales by 20% over last month (or last year). The goal establishes a milestone to reach, and the challenge establishes the journey to reach it. Both are important, yet focusing on the challenge to improve sales develops a mindset to continually improve.

Now consider celebrations...

Balloons, confetti, loud music, large crowds and acceptance speeches bring energy to the act of celebrating, yet they might not always fit the culture or situation. Energy can be found in many ways. Here are just a few:

- ▶ **Make a joyful noise.** Many companies ring cowbells every time a milestone is reached in a challenge.
- ▶ **Clap your hands.** It costs nothing, yet can make

a significant impact. Many people have not had applause since they read a poem in sixth grade.

- ▶ **Create a tradition.** Award a fun, yet meaningful trophy that draws attention to the accomplishment.
- ▶ **Serve some grub.** Food is a universal celebration. Creating the opportunity for the owners to cook, distribute or otherwise create camaraderie among the team draws attention to the milestone achieved.
- ▶ **Send a note.** This is one of the most overlooked opportunities to celebrate and draw attention to improvements. A handwritten card acknowledging accomplishments, creates a quiet celebration that inspires individuals to continue the trend.
- ▶ **Stop and say thanks.** Perhaps the simplest, yet most powerful celebration, the act of appreciation is the foundation to creating a culture of celebration.

Draw attention to success

The main purpose of celebrating improvements is to draw attention to individual or group accomplishments. When the reward of recognition and appreciation is associated with accepting a challenge or achieving a goal, it is more likely the commitment level will be there as well.

Companies lacking a culture of celebration and recognition are always battling complacency among the team. Why should someone put out the effort if no one seems to care what that effort produces? Today's most successful companies know the power in harnessing and nurturing the commitment of the team to increase their capacity to serve.

The celebration should never signify the end, but be positioned as another stepping stone in becoming a better company, department or individual. Our companies and quality of life will improve as we learn to enjoy the accomplishments and celebrate the improvements.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Implement a company-wide challenge, and decide how you're going to recognize team members who meet or exceed their goals.

More than 250 Green Industry companies have participated in JP Horizons' Working Smarter Training Challenge (WSTC), typically saving tens of thousands of dollars annually. To learn whether your organization qualifies to participate in the WSTC, visit www.jp horizons.com/LM.htm today.