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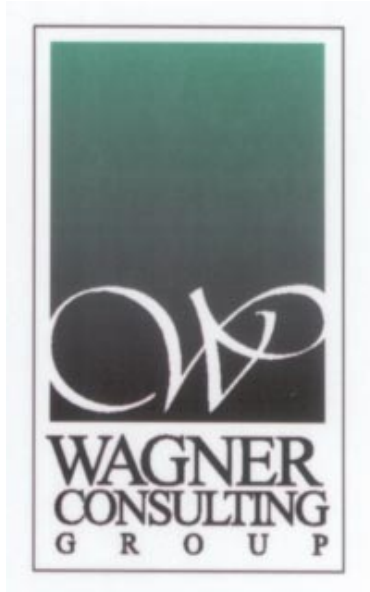
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Focus

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Set Your People Free!

If you are an enlightened leader whose behavior creates an atmosphere of accountability and empowerment, skip this article. You have better uses for your time.

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Acme Corp. Employees withhold 20% of their effort. Profits tank. Company announces layoffs.

How's that for a headline? How many of your employees are working at less than "full sustainable capacity?" **Today's Workers Have Different Expectations** than those of the last generation and **Require Different Management Techniques** to optimize profits. The old command and control paradigm just doesn't work too well.

Moreover, because the Information Age has empowered consumers and drives increasing demands for speed and efficiency, the need to better manage employees as "knowledge resources" is greater than ever.

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Worker morale at Acme sinks. Turnover soars. Owners begin blaming each other and yelling at employees. Company fights multiple lawsuits from present and former employees. Lawyers buy new vacation homes.

In the Industrial Age (think assembly line) hours worked was closely related to output. To increase output you either put more hands on the job or installed more productive equipment or processes. These solutions are easily measured, managed, and controlled. In contrast, the relationship between a knowledge worker's time and output is fuzzier. The costs of poor quality, do-overs, and excessive customer and employee churn are more difficult to quantify.

Many company owners are paying a high penalty in foregone profit because of employee turnover and dissatisfaction with their working environment.

The Paradox of Free Time and Productivity

Finding the right balance between time off, scheduling flexibility, and productivity requires careful thought, but is worth the effort. Often, allowing workers more paid time off boosts profitability through

- Self-motivated employees *who independently do the right thing*, and
- Reduced turnover.

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Employees Demand Flexibility

Employers who offer flexible hours and schedules have an advantage in hiring and retaining workers. Also, guilt-free accommodation for personal events or emergencies breeds loyalty in a big way. Finally, some people work for less pay because they like the working environment. So, doing the Right Thing need not be more expensive.

No Accountability Creates A Demotivated Workforce

Without consequences for our actions, who cares? I frequently hear complaints on lack of accountability from senior managers in all types of businesses.

Let me see if I get this. We're keeping these slackers and gossips on the payroll to demoralize our best people so these top performers quit working so hard and, by the way, the slackers are taking up desk space we could use for workers who want to do a good job. Do I have that right? Yes? OK, works for me!

Consider The Golden Rule

Respect your people. Thank them for good work. Delegate appropriately. Give them freedom to think independently and to fail. Don't trip them as they are running out onto the field of competition. Stay aware of how many alligators are prowling around their section of the swamp, and keep them focused; they *really* appreciate this.

Leaders who set their people free create resilient, stronger, and more productive organizations.

Tom Wagner

We help clarify options so our clients
identify the Right Questions
and solve the Right Problems.

Call us at 800 422-1374 to learn more.

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