

Tips for Shifting Employees into Positive Gear

As the economy improves, companies are emerging from the financial gloom of the past few years, ready to shift into forward gear. Is your company ready? Judging by some key indicators, the U.S. economy began to regain strength as 2014 came to a close. The GDP for the second quarter was 4.6%, equaling the strongest quarter of the 5-year-old recovery (Q4 of 2011).

Now more than ever, companies need to quickly shed the conservative survival mode that has permeated so many workplaces or risk being left behind. They need the best and brightest people to be part of their new projects and ventures.



These are people who are motivated, innovative, and collaborative. Where do you find such great workers? Look again — they may already be in your organization. They've just been in survival mode so long they are hard to recognize because their energy and creativity have been squashed.

Now is the time to help them shift into a more positive outlook and upbeat attitude so they can carry your company into a prosperous future.

How? Although there is no one-size-fits-all formula that works in every company or industry, here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Start meetings by asking people to **share something positive**. If the meeting is small, have everyone participate with some nugget about what is going well in their group or project, or something they appreciate about their work or colleagues. Just a few people can speak if the meeting is large. Research shows that this simple step can greatly increase the effectiveness of the meeting and the group.
- Help people **identify their strengths**. There are great tools out there like Strengths Finder from Gallup. Also, ask people what parts of their job they enjoy the most. Then be sure to actually discuss and use the information to adjust roles and responsibilities so people can put their best talents to work.
- Let people know that their **ideas and input are valued**. Create situations where staff members feel comfortable sharing their ideas with management. You could organize small group lunches involving staff members and one or two management leaders, or you could create open office hours and encourage employees to drop in to chat. It also helps to have leaders walk through the company at least one or two times per week and ask several people about their work.
- Create opportunities for employees to **have fun together** and get to know each other. Make sure there are fun spaces for employee breaks and lunches. Coordinate networking lunches with small groups from different departments. Support after-work activities that are chosen by employees.

Every organization is unique, so it's necessary to find what works for yours. It's important that leaders not just talk but actually take action and show people that times are changing for the better.

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