

"Do you have an attitude problem..."

...and is it killing your business from within?

Unwillingness is one of the main reasons why bad service is so rampant in SA. Jocelyn Daly wrote recently:

"Skills can be improved through training. You can't train attitude – it comes from within that person. It is the willingness to go that extra mile for each and every one of your customers – each and every time. They must 'want' to do it. If the willingness is not there – it is time to discipline them out of the business. Yes, I know that some of you will say – you can incentivize the staff and you will get better results. But that is missing the point in my view." <http://cstores.wordpress.com/>

One of the simplest methods we use in our service stations to manage the performance of our employees is the 2-Question Evaluation. The steps are easy:

1. Make a list of all your employees and get your management team together.
2. Answer two simple questions about each employee:
 - a. Does he/she have the right attitude for the job?
 - b. Does he/she have the right skill for the job?
3. Don't spend more than a minute to discuss an employee, go with your first reactions.
4. Once you've completed the list highlight all the attitude problems in yellow and the skills issues in green. Does your service station have an attitude problem?

Skills can be developed through proper on-the-job training by a specialist. This is something you control and for which you are responsible.

Attitude problems are a little harder to handle. You and your managers will need to work as a team to support those employees with attitude problems. Not incentivize and not victimize. Attitude problems are fixed through setting positive structure not through negative confrontation. Set them up to succeed, not to fail.

Creating structure requires:

1. Setting a clear standard – each employee must know exactly what is required. It should be written down and visible.
2. Maintain the standard – you have to set the example, if you are not willing to maintain the standard, neither will they. To be the example you must know the standard and believe in it.
3. Keep it up – enforcing the standard is the last step, if someone doesn't meet the criteria, he/she should go. Use the disciplinary/counselling process to get them out quickly.

Remember: Employ for attitude and train for skill.

BEST PRACTICES:

DO make a list of all the skills issues identified in the evaluation and include them in your training plans.

DO put the standard of work required in writing and display it in the attendant's kiosk, cashier's area, etc. Be specific, but keep it simple e.g. "greet the customer pleasantly and politely with a smile", "always be in full uniform with a nametag".

DO complete a 2-Question Evaluation for your management team as well. Don't discuss this list with the group, but use it for your own reference to determine the management style to use with each individual.

DON'T try to fix attitude problems with force, confrontation or threats, it just doesn't work.

QUICK WIN:

Obviously some managers will know more about certain employees because they spend more time with them. This is exactly why it is important to have your whole management team together to discuss each employee, it ensures that:

- each manager is aware of each employee, and
- the management team realises that they work together as a group

It happens very often we can work for months without speaking to an employee except for quick instructions or "hi" and "goodbye", let alone discussing work performance. The 2-Question Evaluation is an easy first step towards better performance management.

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Ruan Schoeman	082 782 5087
rschoeman@future-ent.com	
Gerrie Lewies	083 442 7460
glewies@future-ent.com	
Zelna van Schalkwyk	082 814 7747
zvanschalkwyk@future-ent.com	