



Lead Teams

Handout I I

Effective Dealing With Employees During The New Beginning

EFFECTIVE DEALING WITH EMPLOYEES DURING THE NEW BEGINNING

As employees reach the final stages of beginnings, active acceptance of the changes replaces passive resignation. In this stage, employees need to become committed to the organisation's vision of the future, take an active role in shaping its future, adopt new values and attitudes and see the past problems as opportunities to become even more effective and productive.

- **Encourage a Pro-Active Stance that Seeks Opportunities.** Once employees have a realistic picture of where the organisation is going, you can help them move into Beginnings by asking them what they want to get from the new situation. Their initial answer may be vague or concrete and it may have to do with new skills, responsibilities or development. But this starts them thinking in terms of opportunities, which change always brings. The fact is, once they get through a gut-wrenching experience of change, many employees report increased job satisfaction due to greater autonomy and a more interesting job!
- **Advocate Problem-Solving, not grumbling.** While grumbling and venting often go together, it is essential to distinguish them:
 - Venting involves expressing feelings such as, "I'm really angry," or "This whole thing leaves me totally confused." Venting can help employees deal with change. Venting requires the expression of understanding and acceptance.
 - Grumbling involves complaining or criticizing, while taking no responsibility for solutions. Example: "This is the stupidest idea I ever heard of." Or, "This will never work". The appropriate response to grumbling is to get the employee, or group, to express what the problem is and to partner with them in taking ownership for finding creative ways to achieve goals with limited resources.
- **Plan for Easy "Wins" to Build Confidence.** The stage of Beginnings is often reached in very small steps. Perhaps, it is just having an employee go to lunch to meet someone from another department he or she will be working with on a newly formed task force. Don't expect your employees to become empowered, risk-taking, entrepreneurial, high-involvement team players overnight.
- **Provide Prompt, Honest, Helpful Feedback.** This is good advice for leaders whose employees are learning a new task or function. It is especially important in helping employees

overcome uncertainty about their ability to cope, adjust and continue to contribute to the organisation.

- **Recognize and Praise Progress.** Again, fairly standard advice, but infrequently followed! Who feels that they get enough affirmation, praise and appreciation from their bosses? When employees are suffering from doubts about competence and self-worth, every step of progress merit a minor celebration. It will also be a boost for you to see them soak it up!
- **Encourage teamwork within Your Unit and Among Other Units.** High-performance teams are increasingly the key to organisational success in today's highly competitive economy. Teamwork means more than traditional "cooperativeness" and "lending a hand." It involves breaking out of a narrow, assembly-line view of one's job and overcoming interdepartmental rivalries through cross-functional, interdisciplinary and multi-level teams. It also includes much greater exercise of a host of interpersonal communication skills than in the past, on everyone's part. Here you must truly lead by example!
- **Consider Rewards for Cost Savings.** Profit-sharing or gainsharing may be outside your authority to implement, but many organisations are finding such approaches powerful motivators. If not available for you, consider suggesting them to your boss. Consider bonuses also. Special dinners or lunches to honour achievements, theatre tickets, dinner for two, a day off, casual dress days, etc, can temporarily increase morale. But they may be less meaningful than in the past. After a significant change, employees may become more "bottom-line" oriented. They want to profit significantly from their contributions.
- **Explain the "New Employee Contract".** We are referring here to an informal "contract" or understanding. Formerly, the assumption was that if an employee is doing a good job and the organisation is doing well, that person can count on long-term if not lifetime job security, along with regular raises and promotions. This assumption no longer holds true.

The so-called "new contract" is something like the following: *"The employee is responsible for continually finding new ways to contribute to the organisation. The employer, in turn, is responsible for providing interesting and meaningful work and the opportunity for growth and development, so that, over time, the employee becomes more marketable, either within or outside the organisation. Pay will be equitable and competitive based upon the value added. Whatever job security there may be depends upon the success of the organisation and the employee's ability to contribute in the future, not upon past contributions.*

The extent to which this applies in your organisation must be clarified to employees.

➤ **Encourage Employees to Take Increased Responsibility for Managing Their Own Careers**

This suggestion flows naturally from the preceding one. Employees can no longer expect the organization to plan for their futures in a paternalistic way.

- They must keep abreast of organisation and industry needs
- Become perpetual learners
- Develop flexibility
- Learn multiple skills
- Acquire a capacity to interact with all areas at all levels
- Create a network of contacts inside and outside of the organization
- Employees need to think of their jobs as project oriented.

When the current project is complete, their “contract” with the organization may be renewed or it may not be.