

The Ultimate 'Team Building' Experience

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We often read in periodicals that employee trust in leadership/owners of private companies is at an all-time-low. These comments are not only directed at public companies, but private and family-owned enterprises as well. My own observations of business over the last 19 years as a family business advisor indicates that due to high-profile scandals such as Enron, Parmalat and Adelphia, it has become popular in the press and on television to follow such cases on a day-to-day basis, thus setting the tone for employees in general to distrust their bosses.

Granted, your company employees (or your place of employment) may be an exception to the commonly held thought of mistrusting the so-called "bad" business owner, but, regardless of the situation, improvements can surely be made in ownership and employee relationships. For example, any survey you read discussing working conditions most desirable for employees indicates that people want to be trained, respected, appreciated, in the know, understand what is expected and have an opportunity for a career. A good work place is said to be where you trust the people you work for, have pride in, and enjoy what you do and the people you work with.

When you match the value set, the good employee/manager is looking for in a work place with the values of the business owning family, which is

typically reflected in the company mission, values statement and goals, a powerful business energy is created.

Strategic Planning Builds Trust

The on-the-job business tool to create integrity and trust between owners and employees is strategic business planning. This type of planning is viewed as a process to arrive at business goals and opportunities for the immediate and long-term future of the company. However, I submit that an additional, subliminal outcome equally or more important than goals is one of creating a unified team that is part of the planning process, informed, given responsibility, respected, and prepared to set all-time company records as a team.

Harvey Firestone (of the famous tire company) states, "Planning is trust building, which leads to honesty and integrity, which is the keystone of business." The more participatory the plan is within the vision and mission of the company, the deeper and

broader the team will own it. As part of your regular planning process, tie the individual performance appraisal to the measurable objectives of the plan. How you do this is key...

- Leaders need to help everyone understand the vision and mission.
- Leaders and managers need to develop the goals and objectives with employee input.
- The plan needs to be owned and executed by the employees in alignment with goals.
- The achievement of those plans then becomes the basis of reviewing each individual responsible for their plan objectives to the level each had planned for and expected.

Finally, we need to get everyone involved with improving the company by using a question like, "If you had a magic wand, what would you do?" Managers need to question their employees with such a tool to get comments and feedback, then gather their ideas, prioritize them and go to work to execute. Get the employees to start implementing their own ideas, post a list of "jobs yet to be done," with a timetable for completion. When a job is complete, cross it off the list. Put the list in one or more places so all can see it and make sure to review it at least once per week. Stay on target with persistence, discipline and accountability.

Our experience clearly indicates that matching the business owner's values displayed for all to see within the vision and mission of a business strategic plan, with what employees want from those leaders and the work setting, truly creates a powerful force in the company based upon integrity, respect and trust. This is a power we find in companies who represent the top 20 percent of their industries nationwide.

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