

Reprinted
from

PRODUCTIVITY improvement bulletin

MAY 25, 1983

NUMBER 310

Harness Your 'Personal Power' for Greater Productivity

Many productivity improvement strategies focus on the importance of the individual worker and the value of participative management. "You might call it 'power to the people,'" says Darwin Gillett, head of **Gillett Associates** (Farmington, CT). "Certainly, this has been a favorable trend, for it has helped bring out the talents and enthusiasm of people within the organization.

"But if you want to be a highly productive

manager, you need to consider another crucial aspect of productivity—your own 'personal power.' Power has its positive aspect, which has an important place in managing for productivity improvement."

What is this personal power? As Gillett defines it, it's a positive approach to managing that inspires and enables people to go beyond their best. "It's a process of recognizing and bringing out the potential of human beings," he says.

Do You Use It?

Many managers don't make use of their personal power to aid productivity efforts, Gillett claims—and for a number of reasons. For instance, you may defer to a staff expert, such as a computer specialist, in the hopes that this person can solve your productivity problem. Or maybe you're content to enforce corporate procedures rather than risk using your own power to break new ground.

Frequently, negative energies stand in the way of higher productivity. "Negative energies come from anger, frustration, and fear—and they can block your use of positive power. If you act on these negative energies, you fall into the trap of threatening, reprimanding, and trying to motivate through fear and guilt. These uses of negative energy often stimulate considerable action, but not necessarily much lasting progress."

How can you use your positive energies to increase your effectiveness? Gillett recommends three important steps:

■ **"Transform negative energy** into the positive power needed to lead people," he says. You may choose to deal with frustration and anger in various ways—maybe vigorous exercise or role playing. "The important thing to remember is it's not so much a matter of getting rid of these feelings as it is of turning them into something positive.

"You don't want to focus just on your problems, such as why Joe is lazy or why Susan made a mistake and lost a contract. Focusing on problems often makes them worse, because you infuse them with more energy. Instead, shift your energies (and therefore your people's) onto the positive—the results you'll achieve together.

"A word often used these days is *envisioning*," Gillett states. "Envision your operations as being successful. Create and share a picture of what your group can accomplish. This diverts energies away from problems and in the direction needed for progress. Instead of wasting energy trying to figure out what's wrong, people concentrate on how they'll achieve the vision."

■ **Clarify your goal.** To reach that grand goal of the productive department, set one or two smaller, intermediate goals—improvements to

work on. Then, ask your staff to achieve them, Gillett says.

"It takes courage to set a real goal—to go out on a limb and say, 'This is what we must and will achieve,' just as it took courage for Lee Iacocca to say with conviction, 'Chrysler will make it.' " These goals are stepping-stones to productivity improvement.

■ **Demonstrate your faith in your staff.** Finally, "envision your people achieving each productivity goal," Gillett says, "and share this image with them. If you share the conviction that your people will succeed, you'll empower them to stretch beyond their old limits and achievements."

For instance, you might give Ann an assignment that's more difficult than she's ever tackled, but you're sure she can accomplish it and you tell her so. "Give assignments and then work with employees," he adds. "In this way, you communicate the belief that they'll indeed achieve this new level of efficiency and skill. Enthusiasm is contagious, especially when it comes from the boss."

But if you give an assignment only because your boss gave it to you, and you're just passing it along not really expecting people to succeed, then they'll get your message. And you'll get what you expected—a failed assignment, Gillett asserts.

Unleash Productivity

Why does Gillett believe in the positive power approach over other management techniques? "Because techniques alone aren't the answer," he says. "Patting someone on the back is useless if it's not done from a positive emotional standpoint. There are many other ways to set goals, but many of them have become institutionalized and lifeless.

"But when you use your inner power to create a vision; to provide focus, clarity, and urgency for specific improvement goals; and to demonstrate faith in your people, you'll unleash immense enthusiasm and capability which will lead to significant productivity gains.

"In the process, you'll enable your people to grow and realize their own potential, thus assuring continued gains."