

Double the productivity of your organization with no capital investment

Improving productivity should be a goal of every business owner, CEO and manager as it fuels growth opportunities and increased profits. There are two things to look at to improve production; systems and people. It is important to look at both when attempting to improve, as aligning systems and people will ensure the maximum benefits from any change initiative. For example: if one goal is to improve who gets hired so that more skilled or effective people are in the right jobs, it is a good idea to assess the hiring system and see what needs to be enhanced to facilitate attracting and hiring the right person. I will explore more about systems improvements in the future and for now I will look at how to improve people productivity.

The responsibility for productivity of any given department within an organization rests upon the shoulders of the manager or supervisor. The crucial and strategic decision of who to hire or promote to manage the department directly affects the department's level of productivity. A common assumption is that the most knowledgeable, skilled and committed employee will also make the best manager, especially those with more experience and longevity in the position. While this may at times be true, it often is a huge source for problems related to employee performance and department productivity. As well, new and experienced managers or supervisors are rarely provided adequate management training and thus lack a good understanding of what is required to balance the two aspects of the job, planning and organizing, and dealing with people.

This has been validated by a recent study of managers in Quebec conducted by productivity expert Denis Lefebvre of the consulting firm [PROACTION](#). The study indicates that productivity of employees in the manufacturing sector is at only 51%, which means that **out of eight working hours in a day, only four are of added value**. The rest of the time is essentially wasted because of waiting for instructions, materials, and tools, and for re-work of products that do not meet quality standards. Lack of employee training also contributes further to the problem.

According to the study, the main cause for the low productivity is linked to insufficient and inadequate management training. Furthermore, 65% of supervisors do not understand their role and the skills required to be effective in managing and coaching people. This stems from a lack of clear direction from executive management and, most likely, an emphasis on other aspects of management and performance improvement such as machinery and technology.

The lack of good management and people skills also has a strong impact on employee turnover as indicated by another study (see sidebar item, Turnover Tumult), which states that most people leave a job because of poor leadership, bad manager relationship, or not feeling valued. Hiring and training new employees today costs an organization in many cases the equivalent of one year's salary of the new hire, not to mention lost productivity time.

There is, then, a great opportunity to invest in people as a way to increase productivity without any capital investment. Of course training costs money and time, but one must consider the possible return on investment. People are usually the biggest single expense item, and this potentially rich resource is not being sufficiently developed and for many organizations is a neglected opportunity.

What then are the skills that those in a management or supervisory position need most to develop, if they are to act on the opportunity to increase productivity? These are mostly people skills since, as I stated earlier, most managers already have the technical know-how of the job. Here is a list of skills I recommend developing:

1. How to strategize, plan and set goals
2. How to listen and respond with empathy and address performance issues proactively
3. How to share thoughts, feelings and keep people well-informed
4. How to provide positive feedback and recognition and constructive criticism
5. How to train, delegate, coach and provide feedback and reinforcement
6. How to hold effective team meetings that get everyone to participate
7. How to use problem solving as a tool for continuous improvement and empowerment

I have included a link to a spreadsheet that you can use to evaluate how skilled your own manager and supervisors are in these abilities. [Click here](#) to complete the assessment. For those who send me back their completed assessment by email, I will provide free feedback by phone to discuss the results.

These are fundamental skills that executive management must be aware of, and they must ensure that everyone receives this type of training. Of course, it is best to start at the top of the organization and make it a process that everyone follows. The skills listed above are those that will promote and support a high performance culture that values teamwork and participation. Many cultures still function from a command and control perspective, and thus a change in outlook needs to happen to promote implementation of these skills on the job. But the payoff is vastly improved business results and a more stimulating working climate.

To explore how to implement better training for managers and supervisors, please contact me.

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