

Management

THINK ABOUT IT

February 2007

Wales Management Council works with partners within and beyond Wales to promote better management performance at all levels in the economy.

As part of that task we encourage managers like you to consider how they can expand their own capabilities and become better at what they do.

This monthly digest aims to help you, and people like you, to focus more clearly on the practical challenges you face.

We don't pretend to have all the answers but we hope these questions promote thinking that is helpful to you.

If you have views on any of the issues raised please let us know.
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Coining a Cliché

The current issue of Management Today magazine comes down strongly against business jargon, saying: "The liberal employment of phrases such as 'on the runway,' 'blue sky thinking,' and 'heads up,' suggest that the speakers don't have an original thought in their heads."



Is this unduly harsh? Aren't such terms simply part of a modern dialect which has developed to capture key business concepts? Or are they used to as a lazy substitute for real thinking? Would you be better off if you squeezed them out of your office vocabulary altogether? Ever tried to invent replacement phrases for common clichés?

Tackling the Basics

Welsh Assembly Government figures indicate that weak basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, in the workforce are costing employers around £588m a year. Small firms could be losing an average of £165,000 annually through related problems such as poor stock and quality control, lost orders and poor communication.



Would you know whether or not any of your staff had problems with basic skills? How would you go about assessing such a delicate situation and how would you handle it if you discovered that this was indeed an issue for some employees?

Problems after hours?

The EU is clamping down further on the long hours culture with a directive demanding that managers sign official agreements if they are going to work more than 48 hours a week. Against this background experienced international businesswoman and writer, Margaret Hefferan, wrote recently: "long hours are probably the single biggest hallmark of incompetence in a manager."



Is she right in your case? Are your hours a reflection of a genuinely heavy workload or just a lack of organisation? If you were forced to do your current job in no more than 48-hours a week, how long would you survive in the post?

Customers need loving

Legendary American salesman Jo Girand, who holds the Guinness World Record for selling 13,001 cars from a dealership in Detroit over a seven-year period, said his secret was always to like, or even 'love,' the customer.



Some clients and regular customers can be demanding, but do you get into a position where you actually dislike them and simply put on a front in order to retain their business. Won't they see through this eventually and wouldn't it be more sustainable to follow Girand's example and work harder at finding reasons to like them?

The Fear Factor

Robert Hogan, a former professor of Psychology at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, once commented that: "Most high achievers have something eating at them. They have an usual combination of steely self-confidence and running scared."



Does fear of failure play a significant part in your motivation as a manager? Is it something that bothers you or robs you of job satisfaction? Shouldn't you just accept that this driver is common to most managers and perhaps find a way to turn it to your advantage?

A Good Read

"Leading at a Higher Level" by Ken Blanchard (FT/Prentice Hall)

In this book, Blanchard advocates devolving decision-making and giving staff maximum autonomy. In order to demonstrate this, he inverts the familiar hierarchical management pyramid, placing those who deal directly with the customer at the top. There's plenty of advice on empowerment, and allowing people to devise solutions for themselves rather than being told what the answer is, and being delegated to in a controlling way.



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