

What's my motivation?

Good managers know how to keep employees focused

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By David Sharos special to the sun

George Halas once said that "nothing is really work unless you'd rather be doing something else."

Most people feel better being busy and productive. But like a writer who can't quite find the right idea, workers also can be blocked by mundane tasks or a lack of motivation. Time passes and procrastination sets in.



Good managers know when employees need a little extra push to get past procrastinating - even at the expense of another win at solitaire, local management experts say.

(Kate Szrom/Staff photographer)

Experts say that experiencing a lack of focus or an unwillingness to do certain tasks is not uncommon, but there are successful strategies that can help sluggishness in the workplace.

At Human Resources Management System, director of sales Paul Klinger said a good cure for sputtering performance is to review the original business model.

"A business should make sure there are written business plans and job descriptions that are both easy to understand," Klinger said. "It also follows that management or supervision be in place to help carry out the plan. All of us are on a human roller coaster and there are days when you just aren't at your best."

Klinger said good supervisors with their finger on the pulse of their employees know when those working under them are struggling and should have skills to help workers refocus.

"Sometimes all it takes is going for a walk with that person and reviewing the positive things he or she has done," Klinger said.

Procrastination stems from a variety of factors, from personal issues in the employee's life to repeating tasks. Klinger said good managers know how to kick-start employees without micromanaging them and creating a morale breakdown.

Pat Price, owner of Price Group consultants, also said managers play key roles in productivity.

"Management needs to create a culture or an environment that's fun and creative, where people feel safe to be themselves," Price said. "It's all about coming in to work each day, trying to have fun and saying, 'What can we give to each other? What can we give to our customers?' There are those repetitious parts of everyone's job, but they can be overcome."

Klinger said procrastinating "is a human trait" and that it is not confined to any age or demographic.

"I've seen senior citizens that run rings around people much younger than they are," he said. "They have a zest for life and want to get everything out of it they can."

Mark Villazon, owner of MarkWest Consulting, supports Klinger's notion about age and believes motivation for employees comes from showing them how every part contributes to the whole.

"The work force can be engaged by showing them how what they do helps achieve the company's objectives," Villazon said. "Employees should also be a part of the process in terms of solving problems and finding solutions. As far as how a person can motivate himself, people need to find something they can take pride in doing."

Price said she sees a lot of problems with procrastination through her consulting work and offers a few tips for preventing it.

Workers should have clear goals they want to achieve and should have them written out and visible, if necessary, each day.

"It's important to maintain that focus," Price insists.

Too many times, goals are not achieved because people lack the necessary resources, whether monetary or having enough people. Price said those resources are necessary to make goals a reality.

The final step is to reward yourself when goals are accomplished, she