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BUILD YOUR DREAM TEAM Educate, Motivate, Stimulate, Evaluate, and Terminate

By John Tschohl

There's an old saying: Behind every successful man is a strong woman.

I would massage that a bit and say, "Behind every successful business are strong employees."

That, of course, begs a definition of "strong." In this case, I would define a strong employee as one who is skilled and knowledgeable, willing to take on more responsibility than is required, works longer and harder than others, is a great communicator, loves a challenge, and is honest, loyal, respected, and respectful.

What would you give to have an organization filled with such people? How do you think that would impact your business? The answers should be obvious. The next question, of course, is how do you get those people and build a dream team that will drive the success of your organization?

Chances are good that you already have employees who have many of the characteristics I've listed here. Your task now is, in essence, to develop them and clone them. To do so, take the following five steps:

1. **Educate.** My mantra over the years has been, "Train, train, train." You must spend the time and the money to educate your employees on your products and services, but you also must provide them the skills that will make them great communicators. An employee can know your products inside and out, but if he can't communicate with your customer and understand and meet that customer's needs, his knowledge is of no benefit.
2. **Motivate.** Don't roll your eyes and think I'm going to bring up the subject of money here; I'm not. While money might be a short-term motivator, it will not produce the desired results over the long term. What will? Recognition. Make it your goal to catch your employees doing something right every day and then publicly praise those employees. When you recognize your people, you build their self-confidence and their self-esteem. In the process, you motivate them to perform at even higher levels.

3. Stimulate. Look around you. How many of your employees look bored? How many of them simply do enough to get by? The blame for that situation lies with them—and with you. It's critical, if you are to build a dream team, that you challenge your employees. Shake things up a little. Move people around so that they have a sense of the operations of the entire organization, and encourage them to bring new ideas to each process involved. When you stimulate people, you energize them. And, when you energize them, you get improved performance.
4. Evaluate. We got report cards in school for a reason: We—and our parents—needed to know where we were in the learning process and what we needed to do to get to where we needed to be. On a quarterly basis, meet informally with employees to give them feedback on their performance during the past three months. On an annual basis, conduct an official performance review. The quarterly review gives employees an opportunity to improve; the annual review lets you know whether or not employees are willing to do what is necessary to remain with your organization.
5. Terminate. Low-performing employees are a drain. They collect their paychecks but do little or nothing to contribute to your bottom line. They also drag others down with their lack of enthusiasm; they demotivate those around them. If Bob and Carol are making the same salary, but Bob is doing one-third the work Carol is doing, it doesn't take a genius to predict that, in time, Carol's drive to perform at the highest possible level will dissipate. Identify low-performing employees—and show them the door. You can't afford to have them on your payroll.

When you build a dream team, you will have employees who show up every day ready—and eager—to get to work. They will feel valued and, in turn, will value what they do and how they do it. They will give you the best they have to give. You couldn't ask for more.

John Tschohl, the internationally recognized service strategist, is founder and president of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by USA Today, Time and Entrepreneur as a “customer service guru,” he has written several books on customer service and has developed more than 26 customer-service training programs that have been distributed throughout the world. John's strategic newsletter is available online.