

# New Year's dare

Here are 10 resolutions for inspiring your staff

**T**he format of this column is different than my usual approach of responding to a reader's question.

Instead, with the new year upon us and mindful of the common practice of making resolutions, I offer 10 "points to ponder" for managers as they consider what lies ahead in 2006. Perhaps you will want to incorporate some of them in your own resolutions for the new year. See what you think.

## **1. Offer a compelling vision for organizational members.**

To fully capture employees' enthusiasm, managers have to speak to employees' hearts, as well as their heads. The suggestion here is to offer a compelling vision of the future. Remember the old adage about beginning with the end in mind? Show employees where the organization is going and what their role will be. Help them to forge concrete, meaningful connections. Help them answer the question, "What's in it for me?"

## **2. Emphasize partnership and shared responsibility.**

Team-based approaches to work are more common today. Managers will not succeed with only a top-down approach to leadership. Today's managers will be better off operating as coaches and facilitators. Make a commitment to delegating authority, building teams and incorporating accountability mechanisms at both the employee and team levels.

## **3. Encourage your people to adopt a process perspective.**

Managers need to help their employees see how small parts add up to the collective whole. As a manager, help your employees to think critically about their work as a dynamic process that includes boundaries,

groups of activities, inputs, outputs, customers, requirements, participants, a process owner, and tools and technology to be used at each step of the process.

## **4. Excite your customers in each and every transaction.**

Customers are the most important resource for any organization. I would go so far as to say that if you really want your organization to stand out and be distinctive in the marketplace, you have to do more than practice satisfactory customer service. You have to wow and excite your customers so that they cannot wait to have another chance to do business with your organization. My prescription is this: "Make the provision of exciting customer service Job No. 1."

## **5. Keep an eye on the competition. They might be gaining.**

If customers are your "gold," then you better be protecting it and tending to it, because there are people out there (i.e., the competition) who desire it and will do anything they can to take it away from you. Managers need to understand the competition in terms of specific practices relative to current and prospective customers. Remember, it's the fast that eat the slow in today's marketplace. Don't be waiting to offer that innovation, enhancement, etc. in order to excite your customers. Do it today before the competition does.

## **6. Create change, drive change and harness change.**

Albert Einstein is purported to have said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. In an Information Age, we need to be mindful of this message. Yesterday's formula for success may not be today's. It almost certainly will not be tomorrow's.

## **Points to ponder**

1. Offer a compelling vision for organizational members.
2. Emphasize partnership and shared responsibility.
3. Encourage your people to adopt a process perspective.
4. Excite your customers in each and every transaction.
5. Keep an eye on the competition. They might be gaining.
6. Create change, drive change and harness change.
7. Make measurement a priority.
8. Provide your people with positive feedback.
9. Adopt a posture of integrity and honesty.
10. Pursue high performance by linking and aligning individual and collective efforts.

row's. Accordingly, as a manager, work on becoming a "change champion," someone who encourages risk taking and the testing of limits. Give your people the latitude to experiment and use their leading edge tools and capabilities. You just may be pleasantly surprised with what they return.

## **7. Make measurement a priority.**

Most organizations do not lack data or information. It seems to me the trouble has to do with separating the relevant data from the irrelevant. So, my suggestion is, "measure what matters." Take the time to sort through all of the possibilities by deciding what you really need to know (not what is nice to know). Identify leading and lagging indicators in the key organizational areas of financial, customer, operational, and people performance.

## **8. Provide your people with positive feedback.**

This sounds like a no-brainer, doesn't it? Well, reflect on your own feedback practices for a moment. Are you more inclined to say something to an employee when he or she has done something wrong or something right? The funny thing is that most employees will say that they are most productive when they work for positive managers. So, what's the message here? It is to find out what is right with your employees and offer them feedback along those lines. Work on increasing the ratio of positive to negative interactions above 5:1. In doing so, I think you will be pleasantly surprised at the productivity gains that are realized.

## **9. Adopt a posture of integrity and honesty.**

Karl Eller's recent noteworthy book, *"Integrity Is All You've Got,"* drives this point home. Character does count. People do judge us on whether we do as we say. Employees consistently rank honesty at the top of the list of attributes they

seek from their leaders. When managers adopt a posture of integrity, a powerful message is sent throughout the organization. Ultimately, an ethical corporate culture is built. And along the way, greater productivity is unleashed, creating a competitive advantage in the marketplace. So, make a commitment to act with integrity in all that you do.

## **10. Pursue high performance by linking and aligning individual and collective efforts.**

In many ways, this is a synthesis of Nos. 1-9, above. If you really want to help the organization become all that it can be, then you need to help your people become all that they can be. To do so, focus on your organization's "one thing," that for which it has passion and capability and that which drives its economic engine. Do your very best to make sure that everyone understands the one thing and that every task bears upon and impacts it.

So, what did you think? I hope you found at least one or two of my suggestions to be relevant to your endeavors as

this new year gets underway.

It was John Glenn, former astronaut and former U.S. Senator, who observed that, "People are afraid of the future, of the unknown. If we face up to it, and take the dare of the future, we can have some control over our destiny. That's an exciting idea to me, better than waiting with everybody else to see what's going to happen."

I'm with Senator Glenn. Let's take the dare of this new year and see what we can make of it.

Best wishes for a successful and prosperous 2006.



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