

Published TMG Articles

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PEOPLE AND PROCESSES

Every successful business owner/manager knows that a thriving business occurs when you successfully combine great people with effective processes. Put great people into a failing process, and the result is frustration and apathy. Put the wrong people into a winning process, and you usually have poor execution and inconsistency. Neither approach spells success.

Strong business leaders realize that having the right people executing proven processes results in first-class business performance. Unfortunately, too many entrepreneurs haven't learned this basic lesson. Looking for the shorter route to success, some businesses hire great people and expect them to operate without any proven system. The belief in such cases is that good people will succeed without direction, structure, expectations, standards, or partnerships. In short, the mistaken belief is that superior people will succeed without any structure or any effective processes.

Here are the problems with such an approach. Can successful performance be duplicated by all those in each role? In other words, can we do the same thing the same way each time? If not, we are eventually bound to disappoint our customers; customer disappointment is in the cards. Nothing will jettison success like inconsistency. Other problems: everyone is able to define success in their own terms. Picture the results if each member of your team defines a "job well done" differently than you. How can you know that the job is being done to your standards? A reproducible process is required, a proven plan for success — even for great team members.

The opposite extreme favors processes over people. "Micro-managers" believe that they can create a predictable result by controlling every step along the way. This belief often comes from a management style that favors systems over people. Such managers may have forgotten that, most of the time, people operate systems. They are dependant on each other. The problem with this approach is that culture, motivation, inspiration, synergy, and teamwork are all excluded from the work place. Turnover, frustration, apathy, and criticism take their place.

Let us return to People and Processes for a moment. My basic premise is that you must hire the right people and implement winning processes in order to compete successfully in today's marketplace. It is this beautiful combination of two opposites that keeps business operating at a high rate of success.

Process: cold, impersonal, unstoppable, mechanical.

People: fallible, creative, unpredictable, emotional.

Bring these two components together in your company and watch your business grow.

Great examples of the combination of People and Process?

Henry Ford and his creation of the Assembly Line method of production.

IBM and their system of training new employees at their headquarters in White Plains, New York. Each group becomes a “Class” and is identified as such with each and every person joining the “Team”. Highly motivated, extremely bright people are recruited, trained and paid to keep Big Blue successful.

Reading the biography of the world’s richest man, Bill Gates, one realizes that even though his software (Microsoft windows) is a “steel trap” system of computer operations, his company has been built on numerous human decisions, mistakes courageous risk taking and blind luck. His business history is filled with examples of the interdependence between people and process.