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Developing employees' attitudes is a must

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According to futurist Alvin Toffler, the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.

If the pace of change in your organization is continuing to get faster, then you are just like most other companies. Not only is change coming faster, but it is probably having an impact on your employees, company and the bottom line.

The causes for change are often driven by variables that you don't control, such as the wants and needs of customers, investor expectations, the economy, global competition, etc. Historically, companies have relied on products, services and branding as the key elements for combating change that is brought on by outside forces, as well as the methods for gaining and maintaining market leadership. But as we enter the 21st century, most companies have found that employees have become the key differentiator, as well as the driving force behind their success and ability to accept change.

What about your company? Are employees your key differentiator? If they are, and if long-term success is a concern, then you might want to consider a few things that will improve employee results and help you achieve success.

Don't just train employees; develop them for results.

"In business, and in life, attitudes directly determine whether an individual turns a problem into an opportunity - or a crisis."

That's what Linda L. Martin and Dr. David G. Mutchler wrote in their book, "Fail-Safe Leadership."

Organizations hire a candidate because they have the skills and knowledge needed to perform the job. The skills and knowledge gaps are then filled by the hiring organization during an initial training program. Additionally, organizations will typically provide various types of continuing training in an attempt to gain added benefits, such as increased productivity, reduction in errors and rework, lower customer and employee turnover rates and to improve the quality of products and services. But while some companies are doing a good job training employees, many others are just getting by.

No one can deny that the development of skills and knowledge are important.

But why does training place all the emphasis on the development of skills and knowledge when the majority of employee terminations are for attitude related issues, not skills or knowledge deficiencies?

With rapid change and growth also comes a greater need for employees who have the attitude, as well as the skills and knowledge, to turn problems into opportunities. But in order to develop employee attitudes, companies need to go beyond typical training and begin to focus on how to get employees to more effectively utilize the skills and knowledge they already have. Einstein defined insanity as, "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." So if you want improved results, then your employees need a positive behavior change, not more skills and knowledge.

In a recent survey by **Accenture**, senior executives were asked about their top 10 business issues. The top three issues were attracting and retaining skilled staff, developing new processes and products and changing organizational culture and employee attitudes.

Chances are you know people who could use a positive behavior change. A good example is someone who focuses on what's going to go wrong and how they are going to fail, rather than what's going to go right and how they're going to succeed. The reason that a person is positive or negative is controlled at the subconscious level. Some experts say that 88 percent of what we do, think or feel is a function of conditioning or subconscious. If you really think of the pieces that create a subconscious, you will see that starting from a young age and continuing through adulthood, they are mostly negative. When we are children, our parents wanted us to be safe, so they would repeatedly say don't _____ or you can't _____. Those statements helped us develop a negative subconscious. Then, as we grew, the negative impacts got larger and more serious. For example, have you watched the news lately?

But changed attitudes, combined with skills and knowledge and directed by goals, will result in positive behavior changes that deliver improved results professionally and personally. The idea of changing someone's attitude may not sound easy, but positive conditioning also enters our minds at the subconscious level, feeds positive thoughts, feelings, etc. and helps us develop a more positive attitude. So, if you want to harness more of your employees' potential and achieve improved results from employees, then a positive behavior change must occur.

Developing leaders is another example of why attitude development is so important. But in order to develop attitudes and achieve results, organizations must find a process that will consistently transform negative attitudes into positive ones. The one question that can almost never be avoided when discussing leadership development is, "Are leaders born or made?" Have you considered that the only known trait shared by all leaders is the ability to achieve results? For an organization to succeed it must have true leadership: a group of individuals who have adopted a positive goal-driven behavior change to produce desired results.

Remember that the key to organizational success in the 21st century is helping your employees develop goal-focused behaviors that produce improved results. To make this happen, leadership must be involved with ensuring that the organization's development objectives are linked to and aligned with organizational objectives. The result is improved daily performance from employees and a development initiative that is driving the organization in the direction of

the company vision.

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