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WORLDWIT

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Achieve Second-Quarter Success

by Phyllis Roteman

In many parts of the world, the months of April and May bring springtime, a time which is greeted with open arms by people weary of the cold winter months. For many people, the change of seasons is celebrated with a "spring cleaning". Spring cleaning traditionally involves dusting off window sills, packing away unnecessary cold-winter clothes, unpacking warm-weather clothes, and doing loads of laundry.

Why not take this opportunity to do a spring cleaning for your business? It's the second business quarter, so by now your business plans should be in place for the calendar year. As a business leader, the pressure is on you to make things happen and execute those aggressive 2006 business plans. And it's people — your managers and employees, who will drive your success or failure to achieve your goals.

Second quarter in business, as in springtime, gives businesses a fresh start - an opportunity to dust off smart "people management" practices and clear out business practices that you no longer need. Make room for initiatives, processes and leadership skills that will have the highest impact on reaching your 2006 goals.

Start with an Inventory

For many people, getting started is the hardest part of embarking on a major "house cleaning" project. Before you jump in, work smart by taking an inventory of your current people-management and leadership practices. Assess what's working and what's not. This will give focus to your second-quarter clean-up efforts.

Ask yourself and your team:



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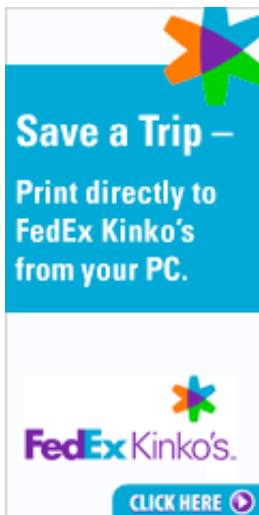
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- What smart people-management practices have you abandoned or gotten lazy about, and should be dusted off and revived for 2006?
- What people-management practices are no longer effective and, if not sharpened, could prevent you from achieving your 2006 goals?
- What leadership skills will be required of me this year, given our 2006 goals and the challenges facing our business?

It can be difficult to objectively assess yourself and your leadership effectiveness on your own. To get multiple perspectives, involve your management team and employees in answering these questions. There is a danger that people may not be honest with you, for fear of hurting your feelings or being perceived as critical. If you truly want honest input, create a safe environment in which your team feels comfortable. Explain how you will be using the information and its importance in helping the company achieve its 2006 goals. Thank and recognize people for thoughtful, candid feedback.

Give Yourself a Tune-up

Our company, The Loyalty Group, has worked with thousands of business managers and leaders to improve their people-management practices and organizational leadership. Below is a five-point “tune up” checklist to get you started on better aligning people-management practices with your annual goals.

1. Employee involvement

Most companies today run lean. As a leader, you can't make it all happen yourself and you likely don't have the budget to hire unlimited human capital. This means that in your business, it's imperative that all employees are trained and empowered to make decisions and expected to generate innovative ideas. To Do: Ask yourself what kind of a leader you are. Do you micro-manage? Do you take over when problems arise? Are you still doing a lot of the work that you used to do, before you became a leader? Are you allowing some employees or managers to get by with doing the minimum? Identify individuals in your company who are smart and willing to take on more responsibility. Set them loose to see what they can do, with guidance, resources, accountabilities and follow-up.

2. Recruiting, hiring and promoting

We've all been duped by a job candidate who looked great on paper, gave a great interview...and then fell apart in the job. What went wrong? Research shows that the primary reason why people fail in their jobs is not lack of skill. It's a poor “fit” between the job and the candidate's personal traits and motivations. For example, an individual with great customer service

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and communication skills may seem like a natural for a sales job — but what if he is terrified to make cold calls or close a sale? A seasoned employee may seem to be a great fit for an open supervisory position — but what if she isn't willing to delegate work or coach others?

To Do: Reflect on the hires and promotions you've made over the past few years. What did the successful people have in common? Most likely you'll find that they were willing and motivated to do the job they were hired for, and fit well in the work environment. Moving forward, pay more attention to personal traits and motivations when hiring and promoting. Don't be blinded by a strong resume or years of experience. Check the fit.

3. Accountability

Business moves fast today. It's easy for employees and leaders to get swept up in day-to-day activities. Don't confuse "doing" with "productivity." Some activities don't yield valuable results. How accountable are people in your company for tracking and measuring their own results? How accountable are people for their behavior? How effective have you — as a leader — been in demanding accountability for the right results and behaviors?

To Do: Build a stronger culture of accountability in your business by clarifying and communicating what is expected of each individual. If your company is to reach its goals in 2006 and beyond, what must managers and employees be accountable for? How well-defined are those accountabilities? Do you hold individuals equally accountable for results they produce — and how they get those results (their behavior)?

4. Employee motivation and rewards

Once you've defined the results and behaviors that individuals must be accountable for, it's time to check your rewards and recognition system. There's almost nothing worse for employee morale than lack of recognition — or worse, recognition that's given to people who are perceived as undeserving. Employee motivation and rewards systems work in companies when employees clearly see alignment between the company's goals and accountabilities — and the behavior and results of the person being recognized.

To Do: Check your compensation structure, rewards, and information recognition systems to make sure that they align with your company goals and individual accountabilities. Are you reinforcing the right behaviors and results? Are you and managers giving positive feedback to people who display both good behavior and results? Find creative and consistent ways to reinforce the results and behaviors you want with your motivation and recognition systems.

5. Leader visibility and communication

Leaders need to be seen and heard from – and not just when there are problems. Think about your “face time” with team members and how you spend it. How much time do you spend asking questions, listening and observing people doing their jobs? What messages are you communicating? What does your team need to hear from you?

To Do: Ask your direct reports and employees for feedback on your visibility and communication with them. What do they need more of from you? Less of? How can you make yourself more accessible?

Still thinking of procrastinating? Remember that cars require scheduled maintenance and a tune up after a certain amount of miles. Think of second-quarter cleaning as “scheduled maintenance” for your business and your people-management practices.

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About The Loyalty Group

The Loyalty Group (www.theloyaltygroup.com) is a training and consulting firm specializing in the "people side" of business. The company provides services in sales training, selection, performance management, succession and customer service. The firm has developed and delivered sales training, performance management training, coaching and countless programs across a variety of industries, for companies such as Knight Ridder, Tropicana/Pepsico, Zenith National Insurance, Alltel, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, Florida Power and Light and Sensormatic Electronics. For more information call 818-981-8806, or visit www.theloyaltygroup.com.

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