



ARTICLE RESUME AND VIEWPOINT

*Before you can recognize, you must see!*

*LaPresse  
Affaires.com –  
November 19, 2007*

One of the main components of mobilization is recognition. Showing appreciation for your employees at the right time and manner is a huge motivator for your staff. However, the whole challenge is in the manner.

Recognition does not mean drum rolls and trumpets to highlight every little extra bit of effort. Simple feed-back can make all the difference, especially if it is given in a timely enough manner to reinforce the performance being applauded. However, to offer such feedback, managers have to feel close to their employees, "observe" what is going on and basically be in the field with them. However, recognition is the whole organization's responsibility and not just the front line manager's; furthermore recognition should be encouraged by top management.

**SECOR's Viewpoint:** managers are generally available on a reactive basis whereas you really have to be proactive and get close to people without hindering their autonomy.

*how to "disempower" your employees*

*About.com, 2007 by  
Susan M. Heathfield*

Empowering employees is a huge task. Even though everyone agrees on the importance of empowerment, they also agree on how hard is to put into practice. What is empowerment? We are talking about a genuine management philosophy meaning that staff can make decisions about their work, that they are aware of their responsibilities and accountable for results.

Several approaches can disempower employees and must be avoided. Here are some examples taken from the short article by Ms. Heathfield.

- **Poorly defined limits.** Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined so that employees can make decisions regarding their work. Workers should know which decisions are theirs to make and which are not.
- **Micromanagement.** Fostering employee empowerment requires that managers trust their employees and give them enough latitude. If that trust is not established, micromanagement will encourage people to continually seek approval from their managers or hide things to avoid reprimand.
- **Question everything.** Here is a good idea to disempower people: question decisions they are authorized to make! You can coach people on how to make decisions, give them advice while they go through a decision-making process to help them improve. However, undermining their confidence by frequently questioning their decisions can greatly affect their sense of empowerment.

**SECOR's Viewpoint:** here are some common-sense recipes: a) delegating everything means surrendering one's authority b) when delegating, ask yourself whether the person can or even wishes to handle the responsibility: if the person does not want the responsibility, the matter should be dropped; if it is a matter of ability, training and support can be provided.

*Munchausen Syndrome or*

Regard – which is one of the four OMI dimensions – incorporates strong safeguards against employee demobilisation using three active principles: recognition, trust and the sense of

cercle de la MOBILISATION



*feigning illness  
to get sympathy*

Drawn from  
Nathan Bennett,  
*Munchausen at  
work, Harvard  
Business Review,*  
11/2007

worth. However, watch out for negative “drug interactions” or “side effects” in case this “medication” is administered at too low levels. Dosage levels are critical and must be rigorously followed; otherwise there will be an upsurge of strange physiological symptoms at the office! The “Munchausen Syndrome at work” (MSAW) for example, similar to the Munchhausen Syndrome where the patient imagines or even creates symptoms.

The MSAW describes the condition of employees that employers consider as experts at identifying, analysing and resolving problems within work teams. The problems are really just products of Baron von Munchausen’s fertile imagination! Just like Argan, Molière’s classic hypochondriac, people suffering from MSAW are masters of invention: they create obstacles, complications and misunderstandings of all sorts, which they then resolve, and are then congratulated for their “expertise” in problem solving – for which they feel immensely gratified of course!

The health of the organization can suffer enormously under such tactics: wasted time and money, demobilization, poor work climate, mistrust etc. The Munchausen Syndrome at work can be caused in part by a lack of regard and especially a lack of recognition from their superiors, making syndrome affected individuals feel less worthy. That is enough to cause such individuals to invent problems and complicate teams’ work relations in order to draw attention to themselves.

The diagnosis can sometimes be difficult to establish with any certainty. Nonetheless, some syndromes have been identified. Is MSAW often a factor in managing conflict among teams or in resolving problems? Are these “problem solvers” reluctant to accept help from colleagues or managers to solve the dispute that they identified? Do they try to put up a smokescreen so that the causes of the problems remain obscure? Are these problems generally resolved quickly when people with this syndrome are not around?

Once the diagnosis is confirmed, the following measures should be implemented quickly: make it clear what the “Munchausener” contributes to the unit. Such people need you to consider their ideas, consult them, value their work on an individual basis and display that you are confident in their abilities. You should also recognize their performance and the quality of their work.

**SECOR’s Comment:** we quickly lost count of all the sick people! A lack of regard does have a lot of insidious effects. However, the article neglects to mention that once the syndrome has been identified, the issue should be taken up with the person concerned before deciding on a solution.

*Management  
style as a lever:  
managers who  
are concerned  
with their  
employees well-  
being.*

*www.management  
mag.com, Debbie  
Terrien*

Employees are solidly in agreement on what kind of behaviour managers who really care for there employees will display.

Behaviour centred on employee well-being:

1. **Engage in dialogue:** communicate information, ask for opinions, give feedback, set up face to face meetings.
2. **Give positive feedback:** recognize work well done and believe that people can surpass themselves and succeed at difficult tasks,
3. **Provide leadership for the employees:** support them before the hierarchy, encourage autonomy and help them learn from their errors.
4. **Respect their autonomy:** encourage them to take decisions and handle a file from beginning to end.



5. **Be aware of the fact that people have a life outside the office:** design the work schedule with built in flexibility.

Negative behaviour:

1. Interpersonal communication: only gives negative feedback
2. Lack of respect: is not really interested in others, treats people according to their rank, takes out his frustration on employees, interrupts them and criticises them in public
3. Doesn't allow the employee any autonomy: always looks over the employee's shoulder (SECOR's input)
4. Stresses hours spent working, not the results
5. Unpredictable behaviour: mood swings, doesn't walk the talk.

**SECOR's opinion:** what is important is honesty and consistent behaviour.

### *The Missing Link*

*The missing link, pay and employee commitment* par Owen Parker et Liz Wright, in the *Ivey Business Journal*, January/February 2001)

This is an old but still relevant article showing the link between remuneration and commitment based on studies by Watson Wyatt. According to the studies, 25% of Canadians are not happy with their remuneration and 42% are happy with it. In particular, people are not happy with remuneration linked to performance. Notwithstanding the authors' opinion, the correlation between the level of commitment and satisfaction with remuneration is just average (.456). Before looking at remuneration, there are other important levers to examine: flexible work schedules, respect, regard, perceived workload and, work performance, etc.

What generates satisfaction in relation to one's remuneration?

1. A feeling that one is fairly paid for the type of work by house standards,
2. A feeling that one's overall remuneration (salary, bonuses and benefits) is fair for the type of work done by industry standards.

The study also shows that performance management is also needed to successfully introduce performance-based remuneration. The best companies have implemented clear practices in that regard. They:

1. Offer stock-options or performance sharing to a large percentage of employees
2. Help under-performers improve
3. Fire under-performers who do not improve
4. Pay significantly more for outstanding performance.

**SECOR's viewpoint:** the link between remuneration and commitment is very tenuous, but the company also sells studies and remuneration systems. We believe the issue needs further study. However, the study shows deep dissatisfaction levels regarding performance management in regard to remuneration and OMI results regularly confirm that performance criteria are not clear and outstanding superior performance is not recognized.



KICKERS

*A recipe for a happy and productive work team*

Drawn from a feature article by Isabelle Laporte in *Les Affaires*, November 26, 2007

An army marches on its stomach, said Napoleon. When you mobilize troops, you must feed them!

That is what the Sid Lee Collective, an advertising firm, said when it built its genuine Parisian bistro. "It is the heart of our company (...) the image of how we share, our favourite gathering place" affirms one of the VPs. A mouth watering menu (duck cutlet, fusilli with smoked salmon, etc.) quite up to the agency's organizational performances. The Cirque du Soleil's cafeteria menu is just as appetising: rack of lamb, tofu, shaved veal *forestière*, cheese plate, etc. According to the chef, "the haute cuisine is part of the company's success."

In reality however, few companies take healthy food as seriously: pogo and poutine still have a place of honour in company cafeterias. Nevertheless, a healthy diet improves creativity. A cafeteria that has a broad choice of healthy meals not only improves the quality of life but also sends a positive message to employees because it indicates that the company cares about their well-being and their health. This is a strong indicator of regard and a mobilizing one! Finally, employees who like their cafeteria go out less, and the company saves on stretched lunch hours that result from employees going out for lunch.

**SECOR's comment:** nice cafeterias foster exchanges between company employees as well, which improves collaboration among them.

*For or against the Christmas party?*

Drawn from a feature article by Jacynthe Tremblay in *Les Affaires*, October 22, 2007

Every year, about this time, a controversial issue comes back to life: should the Christmas party be cancelled or not?

Even though this activity is generally supported by the personnel, the expenditure can quickly become extravagant, and some executives think they are a waste of money. Sometimes other delicate but legitimate security issues such as drunk driving are brought forward by naysayers when they aren't just using the fear of negative perceptions about raucous parties. Certain situations occurring under the effect of alcohol and the general festive mood can cause embarrassing moments at the office the next day.

However, organizations should not lose sight of the symbolic aspect of the "Christmas party". We know social events create bonds and reinforce collaboration and that is very much the case of year-end parties. The Christmas party is generally seen as a token of appreciation that reinforces both their emotional commitment to the organization and their mobilization. In addition, the effects of the Christmas party are all the more beneficial if the company's organizational culture fosters social and festive events on a regular basis. In other words, any reason is a good reason to celebrate Christmas all year long!



### BY THE NUMBERS

#### *Money won't buy happiness*

It is a fact: money can't buy happiness! At least it seems to be the case according to the latest RHI (Relative Happiness Index). A survey polling 1471 people between September 18<sup>th</sup> and October 29<sup>th</sup> found that the opportunity to realize one's full potential in the workplace won first place as a determining factor for happiness at work (36%). Next on the list are good work relations with colleagues (29%). Money (11%) comes in a distant third, followed closely by recognition by one's boss and the level of responsibility. Note that the RHI of people carrying responsibilities was 80 whereas it was 65.1 for those who carried none!

Interesting facts:

- 14% of those surveyed put their work before their health;
- 7% put it before their family
- 6% before their marital relationship.
- 73% consider it important or very important to have a job carrying a certain level of responsibility; women (77%) actually considered it more essential than men did (68%).

**SECOR's comment:** money can't buy happiness, we already knew that but now we have it by the numbers!

#### *In France, salaried workers are committed to their work but feel frustrated!*

Let's look at what is happening to mobilization on the other side of the Atlantic. According to a study by Towers Perrin, salaried workers in France are committed to their work but feel frustrated. The results highlight a strong correlation between employee commitment and company performance and this commitment is rising (12% of respondents say that are strongly committed compared to 9% in 2005). Top management gets the most criticism because only 22% believe that they care about their employees' well-being and 23% believe that management is open and honest! Their immediate superior gets a better rating:

- 49% believe that their immediate superior manages them with confidence and respect;
- 46% believe that their immediate superior encourages new ideas;
- 41% believe that their immediate superior motivates them;
- 58% believe that their immediate superior recognizes and appreciates their work; and
- 42% believe that their immediate superior helps them understand how the company is doing financially.

**SECOR's viewpoint:** the situation is quite similar in Quebec, except that recognition from one's immediate superior is a lower as is the managerial ability to help others understand how the company is performing financially.

#### *Festive and busy atmosphere!*

On the menu: champagne, chocolate and projects that have to be finished by the end of the year! This is a very busy time of year: according to an Accountemps survey, 7 professionals out of 10 affirm that their workload goes up or remains the same through the holiday season.