

What if...

I want my employees to think like employers

Whether a business owner plans to sell his business to an outside party, to people inside his company or to assume a passive role as an exit alternative, none of these options will work if the management team cannot think more like employers than employees.

Is there a process for this? There is, and we refer to this as the quarterly meeting.

The objective of this meeting is to transform the mindset of the management team. If done properly this key employee group will be valuable to an outside buyer, could become the inside buyers or enable the current owner to become a passive owner, knowing that he / she does not have to be there daily in order to have a profitable entity.

The first objective of the quarterly meeting is to give the owner the opportunity to do what he does best and delegate the rest. We ask the owner to write down in list format all of his duties, the things that he does in the business, on a daily basis. There generally will be eight or nine different things on the list. We get the owner to admit that there are only two or three things that he does uniquely well that drive profit to his business. He does these two or three things better than anybody else. We ask him to give away at each quarterly meeting one of his non-unique functions to someone else and keep doing this until he is only doing the two or three things he does best.

The next thing that we focus on is messes. The owner and his management team will identify each quarter a “mess” and commit to eliminate this mess before the next quarter. We encourage the management team to acquire a new ability each quarter. By doing this, the employees begin to see the company, as well as themselves, in a different light.

The owner and his employees ask themselves at these quarterly meetings if there is a “bully” they deal with in their work. This bully could be in their own office. It could be a customer, a client or someone who works for a customer or client. It could be a vendor. Just like grade school, until the bully is knocked down, they will continue to bully. Get rid of the bully.

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Also at quarterly meetings, the owner and his team must ask themselves if they are compromising by working with a client or other party that they don't like, don't respect and under normal circumstances would not have anything to do with were there not a lot of money involved. All business owners compromise from time to time. Four things that we know about these situations;

- These kinds of people generally do not change.
- They drain a lot of positive energy from the business.
- The owner loses the respect of his management team, whether he realizes it, or not, because they see him dealing with this person.
- If the owner “hiccups” or makes the slightest misstep, the problematic customer will come after him.

At each quarterly meeting, the owner needs to prepare a list of the most important relationships to his business. These could be vendors, customers, advisors, employees, etc. It is important that the management team begins to ingratiate themselves with these people. Our ultimate goal would be to have the managers enjoy the same relationship as the owner does.

Teaching employees to think like employers does not happen overnight. It is a process. A quarterly meeting is an excellent tool to get this process started. After just two years and eight quarterly meetings, can you imagine how much better a business a business owner would have? He would only be doing the two or three things that he does best. He will have cleaned up eight messes. His management team will have acquired eight new capabilities. There would be no more bullies and no more compromising business relationships.

Nice picture, huh?

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