

# Job Relations And The Human Side of Continuous Improvement

## BRIEF

*At the heart of every work system, and the improvement of it, are people. No matter how good the technology, the machines, the processes and the systems, in the centre of it all are the people who make it all work. We must all make ourselves aware of the human side of improvement. By doing so we will give ourselves the best chance of success, of reaching our improvement targets. The Training Within Industry skill of Job Relations is the ideal and necessary vehicle for catering for this need.*

## INTRODUCTION

What would happen to the animals on a farm if the farmer fed his animals basic food only, nothing else? What if he didn't check their health, get a vet if needed, ensure they had shelter in a storm? The animals, if given only basic nutrition, would not yield so well, they may not have as many young ones, their young may not be so healthy. The farmer would not get maximum return.

Are the needs of your people who work in your business any different? What if all you did was pay them a basic wage, nothing else?

- What if you didn't provide feedback to your people, and help them improve?
- What if, when they did a very good job, went "beyond their duty", you didn't tell them, and tell them you appreciate their effort.
- What if you didn't tell them about changes in their workplace that would make a difference to them?
- What if you had a very good worker who was very capable of doing more and wanted to, but you didn't provide for that. What if you let them become bored and disinterested?

Just like the farmer, you, the manager, will not get all you can from the people who work for you if you don't think about the above 4 things. Most people don't just work with their hands. They also work with their hearts and minds. If you only think of their hands, and pay them for that, you will be missing out on 2 other important parts of that whole person. Just like a good farmer, a manager needs to consider their people's needs beyond just money.

It is these 2 parts of the person, heart and mind, which have the greatest impact on Continuous Improvement that is sustained. Thus the importance of TWI Job Relations.

## TRAINING WITHIN INDUSTRY (TWI) INTRODUCTION

Training Within Industry (TWI) Job Relations was introduced into American industry in the early 1940's by the War Manpower Commission. Why? Because productivity, quality and safety needed to improve immediately. American industry understood that they needed to focus on the skills of their frontline leaders and managers in order to achieve this. They needed to do more than just pay the people in the factories, pay the carers in health care.

(The 2 other skills introduced via TWI were the skill of instructing and the skill of improving. These 2 skills will not be discussed in this article.)

Job Relations (JR) is a means of building respect for people via specific management / leadership behaviour. It is not a general concept, it is a set of actions that when applied in the workplace will help satisfy your people's hearts and minds. JR also provides a 4-step method that is deployed when a people problem needs to be confronted.

### JOB RELATIONS – THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF GOOD RELATIONS

#### **Foundation - Let Each Worker Know How He/She is Doing**

Doesn't every person have the right to know if they are doing a good job? Note, this does not mean you start performance reviews once per year. What is the value to the worker of knowing now that 11 months ago they were doing a bad job?!

Letting each worker know how he/she is doing does mean that you:

- First clearly communicate what you expect of your people, what you expect them to do, how you expect them to think.
- Help them improve when they don't meet the required standard. This means you support them in improving, not discipline them for failing!

#### **Foundation - Give Credit When Due**

All people, no matter our background and culture, respond to praise. We have a very basic need in that area. What response do you get from your children if you don't praise them when they do as you want them to do? Over time, they will stop doing as you wish them to do. If you praise them, *right when they do the right thing*, the likelihood of them doing it again increases many-fold.

To be able to be effective in this foundation, the first foundation must be in place. You need to *provide credit against the expected performance (of output and behaviour)*, not just in the managers individual requirements they may have set (which might not be in line with operational goals).

Note also that in this foundation we are responding to *extra or unusual performance*, not what is expected as standard in one's daily work. We do need to be careful not to continually giving credit to people for doing what they should do as standard.

The most effective form of giving credit is a one-on-one conversation. You need to have time for this, which means you must make it a priority. Time cannot be managed, there is 1440 minutes in every day, no-one can change that. You can manage what you do in that time, you can manage your priorities.

#### **Foundation - Tell People in Advance About Changes that Will Affect Them**

Many people say they love variety and change, few really do. Humans are creatures of habit, we establish patterns and routines in our lives, work lives included, that provide us with a sense of stability and security. Many people react strongly when these patterns or routines are threatened by change.

Improvement in operational performance is a must for all business. If you are the best, and you don't improve, you will cease to be the best. If you're not the best, then what are you doing about it? If you're doing nothing, the end will surely come.

Einstein said that insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. Thus you must change how you do things, and a lot of this change will be on the work floor or service front.

Change is inevitable, so preparing for and introducing change is inevitable. Part of introducing change successfully is imparting the understanding of "why", why the need to change.

Note, under this foundation the manager is not negotiating a change. The change is necessary and is going to happen, that has been largely decided. The manager is helping people accept the change.

As continuous improvement is about continuously changing the way things are done, this foundation is of particular relevance.

### Foundation - Make Best Use of Each Person's Ability

Some members of the workforce do just bring their hands to the workplace, they don't want to provide their hearts and minds. They just want to do their work and go home. In these people's cases, you accept that (but be careful you have made the right judgement).

There will be many in a managers team who are capable of doing more than they are currently doing, both with their hands, and with their hearts and minds, and they will want to increase their capability. A manager needs to look for these people who have extra ability, and implement a plan to develop their capabilities in line with operational goals. Note, development is always in line with operational goals. The business must benefit from the capability improvement in the person.

So that is the Four Foundations For Good Relations. Sounds easy doesn't it? Well for a manager it is not hard if they are prepared to change their habits, develop a new skill. It is not always easy though because all people are individuals, with individual needs, wants and "views of the world".

The skill of Job Relations recognises this and thus provides a 4-step method for resolving a people problem. A people problem is a gap between what the manager needs to have happening, and what is actually happening, where the root cause is a person's actions or behaviour.

### JOB RELATIONS – 4 STEPS FOR HANDLING A PEOPLE PROBLEM

Via JR the leader learns the skill of handling a people problem via 4 steps.

The first step is to **get the facts**. The facts include the opinions and feelings of the person directly involved and others around them. The leader must remember that opinions and feelings are facts to those that have them.

Once the leader is sure they have the whole story, he **weighs and decides** what actions he might then take. This second step means considering more than one action, and considering the implications of each action on the people involved and production. The leader then chooses what he thinks will be the best action.

The third step is then to **take action**. In doing this the leader considers what help they might need, and when best to take this action.

The fourth step is to **check results** – how have outputs and attitudes changed, was the objective achieved?

Why does this 4-step method contribute to the human side of continuous improvement? Because it provides a uniform and consistent method for all leaders to resolve people problems. This reduces the risk of unfair treatment, of ignoring the human side, which in turn is a sure way of disengaging the workforce. A disengaged workforce will not sustain improvement continuously.

### SUMMARY

The human side of continuous improvement cannot be ignored. Recognise the value of the human heart and mind, capture the heart and mind (just like the farmer is aware of more than just feed) and improvement will have a very solid base. This is easy to say and not that hard to do if a clear set of actions, a skill that can be practiced, is learnt. TWI Job Relations is a skill that can be learnt, and is very effective in helping capture the hearts and minds of the workforce.