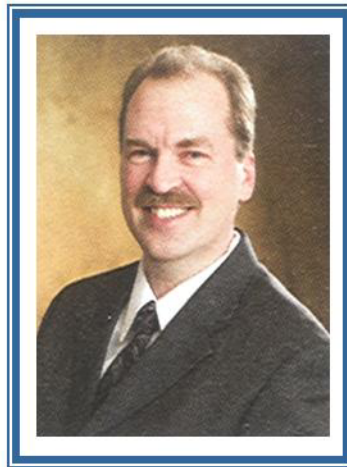


2010

Real Life Management

with Wes Friesen



As featured in

Mailing
systems technology

Real Life Management

With Wes Friesen



Is Your Team High-Performing or Hardly Performing?

"Teamwork is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." — Andrew Carnegie

According to a recent survey, 75% of the United States' workforce is not fully engaged on the job. Many work teams struggle and perform at a mediocre level or worse. In contrast, some teams stand above the normal and are high performance. These high-performing teams (HPTs) are known for their positive morale, high motivation, productivity and commitment to excellence. How are HPTs developed and maintained?

An extensive research project involving over 2.5 million people in 237 companies sought to find out the common characteristics of HPTs. It was discovered that they share three characteristics that directly speak to the meeting of three important needs of team members:

#1: Sense of Fairness

HPTs are first of all characterized by a sense of fairness. People have a need to be treated equitably, and that sense of fairness has three components. There is a physical component; this includes a safe working environment, realistic workload and reasonably comfortable working conditions.

Another component is economic fairness. People have a need to feel they are paid a fair day's pay for a fair day's work with satisfactory benefits, and that they have a reasonable degree of job security.

The third component is equity (being treated respectfully). Included is a reasonable accommodation for personal and family needs and being treated like an adult and not a child.

One way to monitor the perception of fairness on your team is to conduct an annual team survey and include some questions related to fairness.

#2: Sense of Achievement

HPTs are characterized by a sense of achievement. This includes: taking pride in one's accomplishments by doing things that matter and doing them well; receiving recognition for one's accomplishments; and taking pride in the organization's accomplishments.

There are six primary sources for a sense of achievement:

1. Challenge of the work itself
2. Acquiring new skills

3. Ability to perform
4. Perceived importance of employee's job
5. Recognition received for performance
6. Working for a company of which the employee can be proud

One tool we can use to help build a sense of achievement is to participatively set and work together to achieve SMART (Specific, Measurable, Ambitious yet achievable, Results-oriented, Time-specific) goals.

Communicating progress and celebrating progress on goals will help develop a strong sense of achievement within your team.

#3: Sense of Camaraderie

Benjamin Franklin said, "We must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

Five Recognition Principles

A tremendous yet overlooked tool that leaders can use to help build camaraderie is recognition. To help carry out recognition well, consider these principles:

- ▶ Be specific about what is being recognized
- ▶ Do it in person
- ▶ Be timely
- ▶ Be sincere
- ▶ Recognition should be given for both individual and group performance

HPTs are characterized by a sense of camaraderie — having warm, positive and cooperative relations with others in the workplace ("one for all and all for one"). Setting and working together to achieve SMART goals helps build camaraderie. In addition, periodically try having fun, team-building activities. Need some ideas? Here are some to get you thinking:

- ▶ Take your team to a movie. The big-screen IMAX movies are great — even better if in 3D!
- ▶ Play a fun game together, like your own customized version of "Family Feud."
- ▶ Try a fun recreational activity, such as miniature golf, or just have an afternoon in the park.
- ▶ Attend a favorite sporting event, concert or other social event that team members would enjoy. (It's important to know your team on this one.)
- ▶ Last but not least, anything with food seems to be a big hit. Either having food catered in or going out to a nearby restaurant works.

Putting It All Together

Let's look at the six things managers can do to maintain engagement with their employees on an ongoing basis:

1. **Don't let the newbies sink.** Get your new employees off to a great start by clearly explaining the goals and expectations of the team, regularly checking in with them and assigning a teammate as a "buddy" mentor.
2. **Create a physically comfortable work environment.** Ideas can come from peers, conferences and the employees themselves.
3. **Eliminate perks that favor one level of employee over**

another. The goal is to avoid sending the message that some employees are "second class," when in reality, everybody contributes to the success of the team.

4. **Avoid micromanaging.** Give employees as much flexibility and as many choices as you can. Avoid "dirty delegation," and think about how you would like to be treated.
5. **Spill the beans.** Our CEO once said there are three keys to being a great manager: communication, communication and communication! If we don't communicate, a vacuum is created. This vacuum is filled with the rumor mill, which is notoriously negative and will sink morale faster than the iceberg sunk the Titanic.
6. **Observe basic courtesies.** Never underestimate the value of simple greetings, a smile or saying "thank you." These courtesies send a positive message to employees that they are appreciated and that you care.

Let me leave you with a quote from Fred Smith, CEO of Federal Express: "The way I see it, leadership does not begin with power but rather with a compelling vision and a goal of excellence." ■

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Real Life Management

With Wes Friesen



Best Practices of Effective Leaders, Part One

"Everything rises and falls on leadership." — John C. Maxwell

Organizations and teams are crying out for effective leaders. How can we improve our leadership effectiveness? One tool we have is to learn and apply what research tells us. The two most extensive research projects related to leadership effectiveness ended up with the same conclusions. There are five Absolutes (best practices) for getting high performance and great results.

Absolute #1: Get everyone on the same page.

This absolute involves creating and maintaining a clear focus on desired results for yourself, your people and your operations as a whole — and create a means to measure progress and performance. To be a high-performance leader, we must intentionally choose to pursue excellence, and to make that choice a reality, we must develop and communicate the vision to everybody within our organizational team.

My operations at Portland General have been blessed by receiving positive national recognition. The teams involved have worked hard and smart to make positive changes, and create additional value for our company and customers. One thing that we did was to articulate an intentional desire to excel. Here is a sample mission and values statement from one of my operations, Printing & Mail Services:

Mission: *Our mission is to be a "world class" provider of Printing and Mailing products and services. We desire to be recognized as a premier service provider that is comparable to any operation of similar size anywhere in the country. Our purpose is to provide timely, high-quality products and services at a cost equal to or lower than any other potential provider. We desire to achieve a consistently high level of customer satisfaction and to maintain a working environment that dignifies and motivates our staff.*

Values:

- ▶ *We place a high importance on customer satisfaction. We want to meet and even exceed customer expectations. Quality of our products and services is a priority. We are results-oriented and will do what it takes to get the job done.*
- ▶ *We believe our most important asset is our people, so we strive to treat each person respectfully and to train, develop and promote a positive work environment. We believe in being professional, empowering our employees and in having fun.*
- ▶ *We believe in the Total Quality Management concept of continuous improvement and are constantly striving to improve all aspects of our operations. We also believe in continuous learning and are constantly striving to learn more about best practices, technology and ways to better meet our customers' needs.*

Absolute #2: Prepare for battle.

This absolute includes progressively staffing your operation with high-quality people, developing effective planning practices, providing ongoing training and education for your people and ensuring people have the tools they need to get the job done.

Some people have found the following three "Ps" to operational excellence to be a helpful guide:

- ▶ **Physical assets and technology** — try to be leading-edge.
- ▶ **People** — the most valuable resource of any organization.
- ▶ **Practices** — learn and apply best practices.

An ongoing challenge for all operational leaders is justifying the resources we need to excel and add value to our organizations. Let me share some tips that have proven useful:

10 Tips for Justifying Resources

1. Identify important goals and needs, then figure out how to help meet them.
2. Find ways to save money.
3. Know your costs and how they compare to the external market.
4. Work with vendors for creative ideas to improve operations.
5. Partner with other departments in your organization.
6. Develop positive relationships with internal service providers that influence decisions.
7. Take the budgeting process and other "bean counting" tasks seriously.
8. Understand your capital budgeting and approval system and process.
9. Track your volumes and document increases.
10. Excel in operations, and enhance your team's reputation.

Well, that's all for now. Make sure to read next month's column as I cover Absolutes #3, #4 and #5! ■

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Real Life Management

With Wes Friesen



Best Practices of Effective Leaders: Part Two

"Everything rises and falls on leadership." —John C. Maxwell

In my last column, I explained that I believe there are five absolutes (best practices) for getting high performance and great results. I shared absolutes one (Get everyone on the same page: Focus on the purpose of the organization) and two (Prepare for battle: Equip your operation with tools, talents and technology) with you; check out the March/April issue of Mailing Systems Technology if you'd like a refresher before tackling absolutes three, four and five.

Absolute 3. Stoke the fire for performance: Create a climate for results.

To be effective leaders, we must create an operational climate that provides ongoing performance measurement and feedback, motivates people and removes barriers to performance in an ongoing and systematic fashion.

One essential ingredient to create the climate we desire is to remove the fear of making occasional, inconsequential mistakes. The reality is that we all make mistakes, and mistakes can actually be helpful if we learn from them and avoid similar mistakes in the future. The great philosopher Edward Phelps said, "The man who makes no mistakes does normally not make anything." Being a sports fan, I like these quotes from Babe Ruth: "Don't let the fear of striking out get in your way" and Wayne Gretzky: "You miss every shot you do not take."

As leaders, we want to promote calculated risk taking. One of my sayings is, "The wise take calculated risks... fools take careless risks... the cowardly take no risks at all." Let's not be careless or cowardly, but master the art of taking calculated risks in striving for better results.

In terms of motivating employees, refer back to my March-April 2009 column on "Recognition — The Missing Ingredient to Great Results."

Absolute 4. Build bridges on the road to results: Nurture relationships with people.

This absolute challenges us to identify, foster, nurture and sustain relationships; practice effective communication; and foster cooperation through the practice of trustworthy leadership with the people you need to get results.

To build relationships we must focus on helping others. Jesus was quoted as saying, "It is better to give than to receive." Giving our

The Top 10 Keys to Motivation

In a nutshell, here are ten ways to help motivate employees:

1. Provide personal thanks.
2. Make time for employees.
3. Provide specific feedback.
4. Create an open (and fun) work environment.
5. Provide information.
6. Involve employees in decisions.
7. Reward high performers (and deal with poor performers).
8. Develop a sense of ownership.
9. Give chances to grow and learn.
10. Celebrate successes.

employees and other people in our lives our "BEST" will result in stronger relationships:

Believe in them
Encourage them
Support them
Trust them

Another tool that works is to consistently use the 3 "Rs" when dealing with people:

Recognize (show appreciation for skills and good performance)
Reward (include both monetary and non-monetary rewards)
Respect (Golden Rule — treat people positively like you would like to be treated)

Absolute 5. Keep the piano in tune: Practice continuous renewal.

As leaders, we continuously need to improve and renew ourselves, our processes and our people as well as maintain balance in all facets of our lives for long-term success.

I have been inspired by the following quotes:

- ▶ "None will improve your lot, if you yourselves do not."
— *Marcus Aurelius*
- ▶ "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts."
— *John Wooden*
- ▶ "I may not be the man I want to be; I may not be the man I ought to be; I may not be the man I can be; but praise God, I'm not the man I once was."
— *Martin Luther King*

There are two twin philosophies that can be applied to the operations we lead and also to our personal development:

Continuous Improvement: The philosophy that we need to continually strive to get better at what we do. It includes the realiza-

tion that none of us or the operations we lead are perfect, so there is always room to improve.

Continuous Learning: The philosophy that there is always something new to learn, so keep on learning until the day you cease to exist (i.e. be a "life-long learner"). A great example for me was my Aunt Tina, who was taking correspondence courses until she was 90 — and the only reason she quit was that her eyesight went bad!

John Wooden said, "Perfection is impossibility, but striving for perfection is not." Good luck as you continue on your journey to become an even more effective and high-performance leader! ■

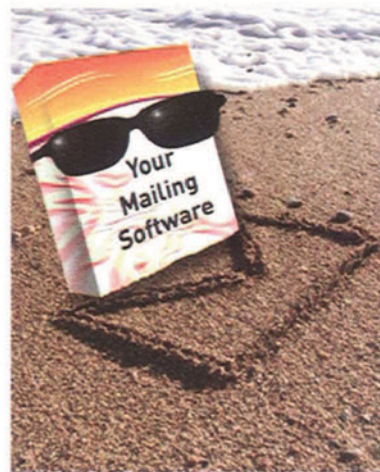
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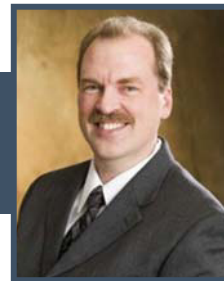
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Real Life Management

With Wes Friesen



Want to Improve Performance? Measure It!

We need relevant performance measures to inspire, provide a common focus and allow us to track progress. Here are some tools to help develop powerful performance measures:

Ask the Right Performance Questions

The Right Questions express the critical few things by which to judge our performance results. Put yourselves in the shoes of your key stakeholders (investors, customers, employees) and ask, "What is important to them?"

When you answer the Right Performance Questions, realize that some measures you develop in response will be Quantitative (numeric) in nature (e.g. how many pieces of mail were produced last month), but some will be Qualitative (subjective) in nature (e.g. how satisfied are our customers). Don't ignore qualitative measures — consider the usage of surveys and other rating instruments. Organizational Development expert Brad Fishel says, "Better to have subjective judgments about important questions than objective data about unimportant questions."

Develop "balanced" measures to judge success

Effective teams add value to all important stakeholders and avoid a singular focus (e.g. being low cost) to the detriment of other important outcomes (e.g. high quality). Following are potential types of measures to consider. For each measure that gets used, we should have a target/goal to compare actual results against.

Measures of Success

Productivity (productivity is simply a measure of Goods/ Services produced divided by Resources Used)

Quality (e.g. reliability, accuracy, mistake-free, meets requirements, etc)

Volume (how much is being produced)

Timeliness (are work products completed when needed?)

Service (are customers satisfied with the service they receive?)

Compliance (are postal regulations, Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA and other regulations being met?)

Cost (e.g. measure overall costs and/or cost per unit)

Intentionally focus on improving performance

How can we strive to improve productivity and overall performance? Following are some tools to choose from:

- Lay out a challenge (illustrated by the closing story)
- Enhanced training and development
- Provide recognition and use incentives
- Pursue wise use of technology
- Look for process improvements
- Be a better servant leader and show more care for your employees
- Solicit ideas from your team members
- Learn from other successful teams

Let me close with the following story from the life of Charles Schwab, former head of U.S. Steel. Schwab said, "I had a mill manager who was finely educated, thoroughly capable and master of every detail of the business. But he seemed unable to inspire his men to do their best. One day I asked him, 'How is it that a man as able as you cannot make this mill turn out what it should?' 'I don't know,' he replied. 'I have coaxed the men; I have pushed them; I have sworn at them. I have done everything in my power. Yet they will not produce.'

"It was near the end of the day; in a few minutes the night force would come on duty. I turned to a workman who was standing beside one of the red-mouthed furnaces and asked him for a piece of chalk. 'How many heats has your shift made today?' I queried. 'Six,' he replied. I chalked a big '6' on the floor, and then passed along without another word.

"When the night shift came in, they saw the '6' and asked about it. 'The big boss was in here today,' said the day men. 'He asked us how many heats we had made, and we told him six. He chalked it down.'

"The next morning I passed through the same mill. I saw that the '6' had been rubbed out and a big '7' written instead. The night shift had announced itself. That night I went back. The '7' had been erased, and a '10' swaggered in its place. The day force recognized no superiors. Thus, a fine competition was started, and it went on until this mill, formerly the poorest producer, was turning out more than any other mill in the company."

Good luck as you partner with your team and intentionally pursue a higher level of performance! ■

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Real Life Management

With Wes Friesen



Developing Your People: The Key to a Successful Team

"The only thing worse than training employees and losing them is not training them and keeping them." — Zig Ziglar

HR experts make a distinction between **training** (improving people's skills in their current job) and **development** (improving skills for future roles). Both training and development are essential and can be interrelated. We train and develop our people through a two-step process:

Education — "learning what to do"

Application — "doing what you learned"

FOLLOWING ARE 15 SPECIFIC TOOLS WE CAN USE TO TRAIN AND DEVELOP OUR PEOPLE:

College/University Classes

As a long-time university instructor, I can attest to the value of having your people take classes to broaden their knowledge and sharpen their basic skills. Whether a person is degree-oriented or not, taking classes in management, operations, human resources, finance, information technology, etc. provides an educational foundation that enhances a person's ability to excel at doing real work back at the workplace.

In-House Classes

Larger companies often have in-house classes available on a variety of useful topics. Work with your HR folks — and don't be bashful in suggesting classes that would be of value to people on your team and throughout the organization.

External Seminars & Webinars

There are a number of companies (e.g. Fred Pryor, Career Track, Skill Path, AMA) that offer one- or two-day seminars on useful topics ranging from working with vendors to time management to dealing with difficult employees. There is also an increasing number of free or low-cost webinars available covering a wide range of topics. I build in dollars in my budget to cover some classes for employees, and I urge you to do so too.

Conferences

Participating in conferences like National Postal Forum and Mail-Com is a great investment and has many benefits. I am actively involved in conferences and get some of my people involved because nothing matches the opportunities at a good conference: ability to learn best practices from the top leaders and practitioners in the industry; ability to learn and see in action

the latest technology; ability to network with peers, vendors and industry experts; and the stimulation to go back home and move your operation to a higher level of excellence. Some may say they can't afford to attend a conference — I would say how can you afford not to?

Trade Associations like MSMA (Mail System Management Association) and PCCs (Postal Customer Councils)

I belong to MSMA and my local PCC and encourage you to do likewise — and have some of your team members join you. Trade associations provide opportunities for learning, networking and professional development. Volunteering to serve in your local chapter further enhances the benefits to you and your organization by deeper networking and leadership development.

Professional Certification Programs

Pursuing certification programs is a great way to challenge yourself and deepen your understanding of the field. My four supervisors have six certifications among them, and the majority of the Printing & Mail Services department is certified. Key certifications related to the mail industry are the "Certified Mail Systems Distribution Manager" and "Mail Piece Design Consultant" (refer to msmanational.org) and the "Executive Mail Center Manager" and "Mail Piece Design Professional" (see usps.com).

Recurring Team Meetings

Many teams meet on a periodic basis for information sharing purposes — which is good. However, there is an opportunity to add an education component to some of these recurring meetings. You or team members can report out on learning from conferences and local trade association events. You can invite subject matter experts from other parts of your company to do presentations — I have used experts from Finance, HR, Customer Service and various operational areas to help educate us. Training videos are also a great resource for team meetings.

Off-Site Training Days

For concentrated learning, taking people away from the work site for a one-half or full day training session is unbeatable. I have off-site training for entire teams that often focuses on team building skills in addition to technical training. We have quarterly off-site meetings for my supervisors and leads that focus on leadership and management training.

Trade Journals

Trade journals are a great tool to keep up with current developments in the industry and learn best practices from industry experts. I recommend Mail Journal (570-686-2111) and free publications like Mailing Systems Technology (www.MailingSystemsTechnology.com) and USPS's MailPro (see USPS.com).

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing involves having a person spend a period of time (often one to eight hours) "shadowing" another to better understand what that person does. I have used job shadowing to allow potential supervisors or managers to shadow myself or one of my supervisors to gain a feel for what is expected. Team members have shadowed others in connecting departments to broaden their understanding of the interfaces between departments.

Mentoring

Serving as a "mentor" or participating as a "mentoree" is educational and valuable. I spent five years as a "mentoree" with a Vice President of the company. I learned a lot from the experience and had a good sounding board when facing challenges on my teams. Likewise, I have served as a mentor to a number of employees within the company in recent years and really have enjoyed the opportunity to help develop people and to support mutual learning.

Special Projects and Assignments: Give Presentations

Giving people a chance to work on special projects is a great method to learn new skills and apply "book learning." I will intentionally give team members projects to lead or support as opportunities to help them gain hands on experience and build their practical expertise.

OJT

It's been said that nothing beats OJT (On Job Training) for skill development. Providing OJT by supervisors or experienced teammates helps people understand and perform the tasks they need to be successful.

Cross-Training

Cross-training provides people a chance to develop new skills and expertise and gain new experiences that stimulate professional growth.

Non-Profit Volunteering

The late management guru Peter Drucker was a big proponent for volunteering in non-profit organizations. Volunteerism is a classic "win-win" — the non-profits gain value from the volunteers, and the volunteers also benefit. Benefits to volunteers include the chance to network with people outside the company, to use and sharpen existing skills, and the opportunity to develop leadership abilities by actively working with others to help the non-profit pursue its mission of serving its communities.

Seeing people grow personally and professionally is very rewarding. Good luck to you as you work to develop your people! ■

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Real Life Management

With Wes Friesen



Are You a Fred? The Importance of Exceptional Customer Service!

Fred Shea was a postal carrier who really took to heart and embodied the following quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.: "If a man is called to be a street sweeper [or a postal carrier or work in the mail industry!], he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say 'Here lived a great sweeper who did his job well.'"

Fred provided exceptional service to all his customers and constantly went the extra mile — he would even drive through the neighborhood to check on people on his days off! One of Fred's very satisfied customers was motivational speaker and author Mark Sanborn, who wrote a book about exceptional customer service called *The Fred Factor*. I highly recommend getting the book and the video training series and going through them with your team.

Here are four cardinal principles about being a "Fred:"

Everyone Makes a Difference — every individual can choose to do his or her job in an extraordinary way, regardless of the circumstances.

Success Is Built on Relationships — the quality of the relationship determines the quality of the product or service.

You Must Continually Create Value for Others, and It Doesn't Have to Cost a Penny — you can creatively find no-cost ways to exceed expectations of your customers.

You Can Reinvent Yourself Regularly — every morning you wake up with a clean slate. We can choose to follow the advice of John Wooden's father Joshua, who taught "make each day your masterpiece."

One tool to measure how well your team provides customer service is conducting a periodic customer survey. By analyzing the results of the survey, you can reinforce what is going well and identify areas that can be improved. Because people are busy these days, I prefer to keep the survey simple and short. Check out the sidebar for a sample survey that you can use as a starting place.

Unfortunately Fred-like service is not common — as Roger Staubach says, "There are no traffic jams along the extra mile." Being a Fred is a choice — how will you and your team choose?

Let me close with a final quote to think about that comes from Andrew Carnegie: "There are two types of people who never

Measurement Is Key

CUSTOMER SURVEY

Timeliness:

Are your jobs completed in a timely manner?

Below Expectations ____

Meets Expectations ____

Exceeds Expectations ____

Quality:

How is the overall quality of the work that our team provides for you? (same scale)

Responsiveness:

Is the staff responsive to your special requests? (same scale)

Helpfulness:

Do you find that our staff are helpful and offer solutions to your needs? (same scale)

Overall Performance:

Are there services that you would like to see that are not currently provided?

What do you feel are some areas of strength in how we serve you?

What ideas do you have on how we can serve you better in the future?

achieve very much in their lifetimes. One is the person who won't do what he is told to do, and the other is the person who does no more than what he or she is told to do." Good luck as you commit you and your team to go the extra mile and be "Fred's"! ■

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