Success Story

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Position of a Manager in East European Countries - Staff

When the smoke from burning iron curtain was slowly clearing away, the communication from both sides started vigorously. The former refugees returned back and pointed with broad gestures to their former proprieties, the keen guys went out in opposite direction to grasp their fortune in a real capitalism. Both – and other groups as well – had soon to tackle problems that usually appeared to be a good bit off their imagination.

A bit later more legislation sensitive activities started to leak eastwards. Transfer of production and trade activities took place. The reason was to make more profit or to get closer to a customer, or – in most cases – both.

There stands often a question how to motivate the post-communist workers to obtain good results and positive cooperation.
To be able to introduce the most efficient motivators, the manager should understand the way of thinking of the employee. And the way of thinking and behavior results mostly from the past experience of the individual.

Under socialist arrangement there ruled full employment in socialist countries that was guaranteed by a constitutional "right to work" that was understood as a duty to have an employment. Some people soon understood that "to be employed" did not necessarily mean "to do some work". The term "Common Property" declared by ideologists was also understood in a variety of ways, often confusing meanings of "ours" and "mine". So, the economy did not show persuasive results, yet the people were able to make ends meet. They went to employment to have a rest before their main work at home – working on their lots, building houses, helping their friends to build houses, etc. In such a way everyone could try many trades and got quite good general skills. The necessity to solve problems led to a progressive in-field training of creativity. The quality, however, suffered on times as there was no system approach and data acquisition and evaluation - and feedback was very random.

As a result an average worker is found in post-communist countries that possesses:

- Good manual skills
- Is interested in what he is doing
- Is creative in problem solving
- Possesses tendency towards cooperation in teams
- Can understand problems when explained
- Learns fast
- For little money

On the other hand

- Lacks technological discipline
- Tends to neglect operational manuals
- Is unwilling to take responsibility
- Sometimes tends to steal tools or material
- Sometimes is not open – tendency towards pretending.

Being aware of the above the manager has a very good material to build a staff with which an excellent organization can be created. The necessary activities are outlined further.

Explaining the targets – energizing. Explain the objective in sufficient details. Tell what will be different once the objective is reached. Explain the rules. Underline the importance of each individual on achieving the result. Focus on quality as an inherent part of result of work; "don't waste your time with low quality". Be aware of checking that quality criteria were understood. Explain economy fundamentals. Make company problems their problems.

Training the mid-and-low-management. Teach them a systematic approach to problem solving. Give them simple idea how to deal with staff. How to instruct, how to tackle with a conflict. Introduce a system of "ideas racking" (the supervising staff should collect new ideas, report them up and take care about feedback to author). Teach simple methods of data handling. Do not forget to audit. Talk about problems, give suggestions (try not to criticize) and show appreciation for good results. This kind of an in site training is very demanding and time consuming – yet worth doing to start positive changes.

Removing "deadwood" (showing it is serious). There could be individuals that break local common rules. Take the time to explain the situation, the necessity to keep rules to reach common objective in a time given. Give another chance. If repeatedly disobeyed, get rid of them.

Transparent way of results identification and transparent system of rewards. When the objectives are well defined, introduce a system of results visualization that is generally accessible. Try to show a list of contributions of individuals, make rules of rewarding and keep them.

"Controlled" creativity. When an operator is explained a new operation and given an Operation Manual, he usually glances through it and does the operation in his own "creative" way without informing anyone. It is often the case that the "corrected" procedure proves useful for the particular operation, yet neglects some minor detail that would prove disastrous for the product. Get prepared the supervisors for this case. Avoid, however, to kill the idea. The creativity is basically very positive phenomenon and it is necessary to control its way i.e. to "rack" the ideas and forward them to responsible staff for evaluation. Never forget to give feedback to an author, eventually give him a reward. In this way it is possible to encourage people to have new ideas and at the same time to avoid harmful effects of their unauthorized application.

Support the staff who get outstanding results. Show them your appreciation and give them an opportunity to make even better results. Not everyone is willing to perform for excellence. So, encouraging those who have the energy to do it and creating good conditions for their fulfillment, is a cheap way to excellence for your company.

To deploy the above outlined access is quite demanding at the beginning. It requires a full-time discreet supervision until the system operates. If it is done thoroughly it would make up for the strain and you are surprised with a synergy effect that comes as a result.