IMPROVING MORALE:
IT CAN BE DONE
WITHOUT FROSTING

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Columbia, CT

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Who am I & How did I get here?

A graduate degree & academic career in Sociology

A change in career to Libraries

Jobs in Special Libraries → Academic Libraries → Large urban public libraries → Small, rural Libraries

Now: Library Director
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The Queen of Bad Job situations

NOTICE:
Punishments will continue until morale improves!
MORALE:

The mental and emotional condition of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand.
How to know if you have a morale problem
The Myth of the “bad employee”

“One bad apple don’t spoil the whole bunch, girl….”
When one person speaks…

It often means that others are thinking the same question.
How to know if you have a morale problem
What’s your sign?

• Overall decreases in productivity
• Lots of turn over in staff
• Increase of staff out sick
• Frequent or blatant inappropriate comment or behavior
• Changes in customer service, poor service with problem patrons
• Changes in staff dress – shifting to more unprofessional appearance
• Changes in patron attitude, more items left about, trash not thrown out, messier rest rooms
Defining the root of the problem:

Low morale in the work place occurs because workers see and experience real problems that go unheeded and unfixed.

Address the problems & morale improves.
Figuring out the real problem

• Step 1: Listen

• Step 2: Listening beyond the surface
  • Don’t internalize or personalize
  • Acknowledge fear is real and legitimate
  • Recognize fear may be justified
  • Listening through other means: surveys or suggestion box

• Step 3: Look for patterns

• Step 4: Take all things seriously
MAKING CHANGE
The importance of policy & procedure
(or rules and process)
The importance of policy & procedure

In my experience, nine times out of ten, low morale centers on problems that are easily resolved, but have escalated because of lack of rules, processes, or enforcement of policy and procedures.

Policy that is ignored or doesn’t exist is demoralizing.

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4 Basic Tenants when dealing with Policy & Morale

1. Rules & processes should be known

2. Policy and procedure should exist for reasons & be appropriate

3. Rules need to apply to every one

4. Policy & procedures are only valuable if enforced.
EVERYONE should follow policy and procedures, just as everyone should have input in their creation.

Regardless:

Never underestimate the power of modeling behavior!
WARNING: Morale cannot improve if the boss is breaking the rules.
Ridiculous Policy?

Nothing helps more than a straight forward acknowledgement.
Making Change

1. Examine Policy & Procedures
2. Fix the things you can fix
Fix the things you can

Small problems that have been ignored as trivial can be fixed.
Making Change

1. Examine Policy & Procedures
2. Fix the things you can fix
3. Work together
Cultivate relationships with your co-workers

When people know they are not alone, the situation can change.
Making Change

1. Examine Policy & Procedures
2. Fix the things you can fix
3. Work together
4. Generate hope
Generating Hope

1. Actions = hope
2. Solidarity = hope
You are not alone!

There is strength in numbers!

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Making Change

1. Examine Policy & Procedures
2. Fix the things you can fix
3. Work together
4. Generate hope
5. Acknowledgement
Acknowledgement

You’re right.
or
I don’t know.
For administrators & supervisors:

to improve morale you must trust and support your staff!

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Trust & Support Staff

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Trusting & Supporting Staff

1. Communicating
2. Following through
3. Having clear & enforced policy
   (occasional pastry is good)
A word about truly bad situations....

Leave!
**Bottom Line:**

Low morale in the workplace occurs because workers see and experience real problems that go unattended.

If progress can be made to resolve the real issues, morale can be improved.
Questions?

Please feel free to contact me:

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