

## CONFRONTATION CREDITS

### One Key To Motivation

By Peter A. Land

As a supervisor it is your job to keep your employees motivated. If the truth were known, you really can't motivate your employees, because the only true motivation is self-motivation. But you can and must create a positive environment or atmosphere around all employees so they will personally assess the environment in such a way that creates self-motivation in their minds. Sounds complicated, doesn't it? Well, it is! There's nothing more complex than human behavior. Before you put "motivation" in the "too tough pile" and give up, I want to share with you a valuable skill to help you create self-motivated employees. Think of your relationship with each of your subordinates as an "emotional bank account." As with most bank accounts, we routinely make deposits and withdrawals. The greatest "no-no" with any bank account is becoming overdrawn.

There is a parallel in dealing with people. You make deposits with people when you provide positive reinforcement, praise, recognition, or simply treat them with dignity and respect. Emotional withdrawals are made when you criticize inappropriately, rebuke, embarrass, or otherwise make them feel insignificant and lower their self esteem. Even confronting honest mistakes results in a withdrawal.

As a supervisor your praise is valued by your subordinates; they willingly accept deposits when you go to the trouble to make them. Let's assume you realize that people don't do jobs – they do tasks. Jobs are made up of an array of tasks. It's the many tasks they actually do in order to get the job accomplished.

Let's further assume you appreciate the fact that most people do most tasks very well most of the time. You value your employees and notice the good work they are doing daily. You take a moment each day to sincerely thank them, comment about some task they did better, quicker, cheaper, neater, sooner, etc. You've made some deposits with your employees. You have established some "positive confrontation credits" with the people who value them the most.

Then – oops – someone makes a mistake. It's also your job as supervisor to deal with (confront) deviations. So you speak to the errant employee in private, describe the error in objective terms, seek the reason rather than assign blame – generally correct the situation with dignity and class. You've just made a withdrawal; it's your job.

Great managers deal positively with the deviations in a timely manner so standards and pride are preserved, but they never overdraw! Oddly enough, an employee's overall attitude, morale, and motivation are not influenced so much by the last transaction, but by the running balance. If you've built up sufficient positive confrontation credits by sincerely reinforcing your employees, and then confronting occasional deviations does not overdraw your emotional account with the people who look to you for leadership.

So there you have it: a simple but effective way to help create an atmosphere that results in self-motivated employees. Your interest in this emotional bank account will pay great dividends.

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