

The Associate's Role in Delivering a Fair Day's Work for a Fair Day's Pay¹

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Introduction

Please answer the following question: Nearly all associates will do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay when their leader develops and maintains an appropriate work atmosphere.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

How did you answer this question? The statement "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay" suggests that both the associate and manager have a role to play. What does it mean to provide a fair day's work for a fair day's pay anyway? Before we share our thoughts, take a moment to consider the role associates play in putting forth a "fair day's pay."

Managers and supervisors often have more influence over the productivity of their associates than they realize. Although the labor market is showing some signs of loosening, inappropriate management beliefs and practices can cause associates to put forth a productivity level that can best be described as "I will do just enough to get by" (or potentially even less). ["After all, if I get fired from this job, it is relatively easy to find another one that pays just as much."] An associate who

decides to "just get by" is not likely to believe that he has received a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

Eight Agree/Disagree Statements

The following statements focus on the associate's role in balancing a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. The more managers understand how "typical" associates respond to the following eight statements, the more effective they will become in securing a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. Please give your answer to the following eight agree/disagree statements. For maximum effectiveness, please answer these statements before reading the authors' comments.

1. Job security and good pay are the factors that associates most want from their job.
Agree _____ Disagree _____
2. It is natural for people to resist change.
Agree _____ Disagree _____
3. Associates receive a benefit from inappropriate behavior or they would not act that way.
Agree _____ Disagree _____

1. This is EDIS document HR 008, a publication of the Department of Food and Resource Economics, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. Published June 2001. Please visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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4. Lack of job knowledge is the number one cause of unsatisfactory work performance.
Agree _____ Disagree _____
5. Money is generally an effective motivator of people.
Agree _____ Disagree _____
6. Some people are just not motivated.
Agree _____ Disagree _____
7. Associates do not need to be told when they are doing a good job because they generally know when they do good work.
Agree _____ Disagree _____
8. Associates are not willing to work as hard today as they did 20 years ago.
Agree _____ Disagree _____

Number of your agree statements? _____

Number of your disagree statements? _____

Authors' Comments

Your authors believe there is only one "agree" statement and seven "disagree" statements. The following is a discussion of the agree/disagree statements from your authors' perspective (based on current behavioral research).

Job security and good pay are the factors that associates most want from their job. Disagree. Research has shown that there are a number of factors that rate higher than security and good pay. These more highly-rated factors include a feeling of being in on things, a full appreciation of the work being done, and help with personal problems. For example, associates who are trying to support their families on minimum wages may be more concerned with job security than feeling like they are in on things. However, it is clear that even these associates have significant non-monetary needs from their work.

It is natural for people to resist change. Disagree. Most people would agree that it is natural for people to want to improve themselves and to better their lives. If you agree that most people want to improve themselves, then you will find yourself in an awkward position if you also believe it is natural

for people to resist change. After all, improvement requires change. The authors believe that people do not resist change, but rather that they resist being changed. There is a significant difference between the two. An effective manager will find ways to show associates how change will lead to self-improvement. When change is resisted it is generally because workers have not been involved in the decision-making; therefore, they do not understand the changes and/or they perceive they will be made worse off after the change.

Associates receive a benefit from inappropriate behavior or they would not act that way. Agree. Even if the behavior does not benefit the organization, an associate is likely to carry out an inappropriate behavior if it benefits the associate. That is, something in the associate's environment is reinforcing the inappropriate behavior, and it is likely to continue. For example, consider the associate who is constantly 20 minutes late for work. The benefit the associate may be receiving from this inappropriate behavior is 20 minutes of additional sleep, or the inappropriate behavior is an attempt to "get back" at management for a perceived injustice.

Lack of job knowledge is the number one cause of unsatisfactory work performance. Disagree. Research has shown (and managers have confirmed) that for most associates, unsatisfactory work performance is a direct result of their not wanting to carry out assigned job duties. There are two primary reasons for unsatisfactory work performance related to job knowledge. First, the associate truly did not know how to carry out the assigned job duties (total lack of job knowledge). Second, the associate did not want to carry out the assigned job duties (lack of motivation). Each reason demands a different corrective action. As managers, we are often encouraged to look inwardly first when dealing with unsatisfactory work performance. Please keep in mind that, many times, unsatisfactory work performance is due to the associate's unwillingness to carry out assigned job duties.

Money is generally an effective motivator of people. Disagree. Research has shown that there are a number of factors that rate higher than money for motivating associates. More highly-rated factors

include a feeling of being in on things, a full appreciation of the work being done, and help with personal problems. Although your authors concede that money may be an effective motivator of people in the short-term, money has a greater potential to become a de-motivator when the associate believes the level of money is not fair or adequate in the long-term. Consider the recent decision by the Florida Legislature to increase the salaries of Florida's elementary and secondary school teachers by \$850. Most of these teachers consider this pay raise a "slap in the face," and many doubt the Legislature's commitment to education. There is little doubt that this pay raise is being seen as insufficient and will likely have more of a de-motivating rather than a motivating influence on Florida's teachers. In your organization, think about the last time your workers received a raise. Were they motivated to be more productive? Most managers respond to this question with a definite "No."

Some people are just not motivated. Disagree. Do you find it strange that your authors disagree with this statement? Please consider the great lengths (how motivated) to which some associates will go just to get out of work. In this sense, one might say they are indeed motivated, just not in the way the manager or organization would prefer. The key for managers is to channel this creativity and effort into ways that benefit both the organization and the associate. All associates are motivated, but their motivation is not always positive.

Associates do not need to be told when they are doing a good job because they generally know when they do good work. Disagree. Most of us know when we have done a good job, and as humans, we crave praise and recognition. For example, think back to the last time you completed a time-consuming project at work and thought you did well on it. Just thinking you did a good job was not as rewarding as actually receiving positive feedback from management for the good job you did.

Associates are not willing to work as hard today as they did 20 years ago. Disagree. It is normal for every generation to believe that the "next generation" does not work as hard as they did, or that they have it easier. Recent studies have shown

that as a society, we are working more hours today than ever before. This is driven, in part, by the need to support a certain standard of living.

Conclusion

We hope that this article caused you to re-evaluate some of the common misconceptions from an associate's perspective surrounding a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. We invite readers to provide feedback (via email) on whether or not you agree with the authors' position on these agree/disagree statements.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome and you may email us directly at wsocki@ufl.edu or respond via extension web page <http://webct.nerdc.ufl.edu:8910/public/WysockiExtension/index.html>.

Drs. Wysocki and Kepner are happy to lead a workshop on "A Fair Day's Work For A Fair Day's Pay."

References

Extension presentations led by Professor Karl Kepner.

Class discussions in AEB 4424 (Human Resource Management in Agribusiness) and AEB 5757 (Strategic Agribusiness Human Resource Management).