

## A Manager's Role in Obtaining a Fair Day's Work for a Fair Day's Pay — Part II<sup>1</sup>

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Allen F. Wysocki and Karl W. Kepner<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

In an earlier article titled "A Manager's Role in Obtaining a Fair Day's Work for a Fair Day's Pay—Part I," we discussed the role managers play in achieving a fair day's work for a fair day's pay based on readers' responses to eight agree/disagree statements. In this article, we will revisit the challenge of getting a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

**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 is a fair day's work for a fair day's pay anyway? Take a moment to consider the role managers play in helping associates put forth a "fair day's pay."

Managers and supervisors often have more influence over the productivity of their associates than they realize. 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). Obviously, in today's exceedingly competitive marketplace, an associate who attempts to "just get by" will not help management to match a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. Furthermore, if workers are being fairly paid and are not doing a fair day's work, managers only need to examine themselves to discover the reasons.

### Eight Agree/Disagree Statements

The extent to which the managers in your organization hold on to beliefs that tend to retard employee productivity and organizational profitability can be determined by the answers to the following eight agree/disagree statements. For maximum effectiveness, please answer these statements before reading the authors' comments.

1. It is natural for managers to provide more negative than positive feedback in the workplace.  
Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Allen F. Wysocki, assistant professor, and Karl W. Kepner, distinguished professor, Department of Food and Resource Economics, Food and Resource Economics, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

2. When working with associates to improve performance, it is of critical importance to determine the specific reason(s) for the inappropriate behavior.  
Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Negative feedback will not usually result in an improvement in associate performance.  
Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Most positive feedback that managers give to associates for good performance is not heard by the associates.  
Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Effective supervisors manage associates by exception.  
Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_
  6. Investing in new technology is more important to organizational success than investing in associate development.  
Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_
  7. In creating a positive motivational climate, it is important to treat associates equally.  
Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_
  8. Good-people managers utilize the Golden Rule: "Do unto other as you would have them do unto you."  
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).

**It is natural for managers to provide more negative than positive feedback in the workplace.** Disagree. We know you are thinking that the authors have lost their minds on this question. While it may be true that many managers provide more negative than positive feedback, the key word here is

"natural." The authors argue that managers have been conditioned by years of observation to provide more negative than positive feedback in the workplace. If you believe in the innate goodness of humankind, then it should be more natural to provide more positive than negative feedback in the workplace. Providing negative feedback is not a natural behavior. It is a learned behavior, often first learned from our parents. Given that it is a learned behavior then it is also possible to unlearn it.

**When working with associates to improve performance, it is of critical importance to determine the specific reason(s) for the inappropriate behavior.** Disagree. Managers often like to know what the specific reasons are for poor performance, but the "critical" issue is how the associate will improve his performance in the future. The specific reasons for poor performance certainly can be used to help the manager and the associate improve future performance, but the primary focus should be on improving future performance. Since specific reasons for poor performance may be of a very personal nature, the manager should act in a gentle and kind manner, with an eye toward using the associate's ideas on what he is going to do to improve future performance.

**Negative feedback will not usually result in an improvement in associate performance.** Disagree. It is possible for negative feedback to result in minimal, short-term improvement in associate performance. Improvement of this kind is associated with compliance motivation (doing just enough to get by). Furthermore, after a short period the associate is likely to revert back to unacceptable performance levels, making additional feedback necessary. You can bet the associate is a very unwilling participant in this type of management and will only do what is absolutely required. Associates operating under compliance motivation can be easily recognized as those associates who usually leave work exactly on time, do only assigned tasks (those included in their job description), and are always just meeting and/or pushing deadlines. Another problem with negative feedback is that it creates a situation where the associate is unwilling to go the extra mile, which can be devastating in today's highly-competitive business environment.

**Most positive feedback that managers give to associates for good performance is not heard by them.** Agree. This is because of the overwhelming use of negative feedback, and the inappropriate way most positive feedback is presented. How many times have you heard a manager give positive feedback only to destroy it by following the praise with three simple letters: "BUT." Just as we recommend that you do not sugar coat criticism, we also recommend that you do not mix "But" statements with praise. This results in the associate focusing on the criticism to the exclusion of the praise.

**Effective supervisors manage associates by exception.** Disagree. Management by exception means that the only time a manager "manages" is when there is a problem or an exception to acceptable performance. Most of us know when we have done a good job, and as humans, we crave praise and recognition. An important component of getting a fair day's work for a fair day's pay is to recognize good performance. Managers who manage by exception become negative managers, and associates do not look forward to interacting with them. This technique destroys manager/associate communication and is not conducive to creating a positive motivational climate.

**Investing in new technology is more important to organizational success than investing in associate development.** Disagree. Some readers may have agreed with this statement given the increasing role of technology in business and our society. However, most managers indicate that their organization's most important resource is their human capital. These same managers think nothing of spending \$10,000 on technology, but balk at spending even \$1,000 to provide human resource management training for their associates.

**In creating a positive motivational climate, it is important to treat associates equally.** Disagree. This practice is counter-intuitive to building an effective motivational climate and increasing the productivity of your associates. As a sign on the senior author's door states: "There is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals." If associates are putting forth different levels of effort

or if they have different abilities, treating them equally will create a de-motivational environment for excellent performers, average/typical performers, and poor performers. As your junior author's uncle used to say regarding the transfer of ownership on the family farm: "I do not have to treat everyone equally, I just have to be fair." The same advice is appropriate for creating a positive motivational climate. Associates are different. For maximum productivity, this requires managers to treat their associates differently (equitably), not equally.

**Good people managers utilize the Golden Rule: "Do unto other as you would have them do unto you."** Disagree. What??? How can your authors disagree with this statement which is taught to most of us in our youth? The problem with the Golden Rule is that it assumes associates have the same value structure as you, the manager, and that they wish to be treated the same as you. We suggest managers use the Platinum Rule: "Treat others as they wish to be treated." Managers who implement the Platinum Rule are in a much better position to get a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

## Conclusion

We hope that this article caused you to re-evaluate some of the common misconceptions 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](mailto: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).