

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

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Do you agree or disagree with the statement that “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”?

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 work.”

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). An associate who decides to “just get by” is not likely to believe that he has received a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work.

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 answer the following eight agree/disagree statements. For maximum effectiveness, please answer these statements before reading the authors’ comments.

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1. Job security and good wages are the most important factors associates 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 _____
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. Agree _____ Disagree _____
8. Associates are not willing to work as hard today as in the past. 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 wages are the most important factors associates want from their job. Disagree. Research has shown that there are a number of factors associates rate higher than security and good pay. These more highly rated factors include a feeling of inclusiveness in the organization and being appreciated by management. For example, while associates who are trying to support their families on minimum wages may be concerned about job security, it is clear that these associates have significant nonmonetary needs as well 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, and therefore do not understand the changes or 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 often breaks the rules. The benefit the associate receives from this inappropriate behavior may be a false sense of self-empowerment or righting a perceived injustice by management.

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: (1) the associate truly did not know how to carry out the assigned job duties (total lack of job knowledge), or (2) the associate did not want to carry out the assigned job duties (lack of motivation). Either way, the situation needs to be corrected.

Money is generally an effective motivator of people. Disagree. Research has shown that there are a number of more highly rated factors than money for motivating associates. Factors that are highly rated include a feeling of inclusiveness within the organization and being appreciated by management. Money may be an effective motivator of people in the short term, but not in the long term. There need to be more benefits than just money to keep associates in your organization, such as health benefits, vacation time, work schedule flexibility, etc.

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. Disagree. Most of us need praise and recognition. Think back to the last time you completed a difficult project at work and knew 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 in past. Disagree. Studies have shown that as a society, we are working more hours now than ever before.