

Developing Your People: Becoming An E-Myth Mentor

*Freeing your people to move
beyond their limitations*



SNAPSHOT

The E-Myth Mastery Program

Module 4: Foundations of E-Myth Management

Business Development Process: MG-0040

"If everyone cares, the pies will take care of themselves."

— Sarah in *The E-Myth Revisited*

Overview

"People problems" are the #1 frustration in most businesses. More than money problems, competition, government regulations, or anything else.

The origin of so-called people problems is trying to get people to do things they don't want to do in the first place. But the truth is *you can't!* You can't get people to do anything they don't want to do.

If you want a thriving business, you'll need to create an environment in which "doing it" is more important than not doing it. ...an environment where people feel valued for who they are and what they do. ...an environment where people care so much about what they do and how they do it, that nothing will stand in their way.



Systems for Developing Your People

This process in your E-Myth Mastery Program introduces you and your managers to a systemic approach for developing your employees. These systems must be infused into the way you do business every day. They are not "tricks" to be pulled out of a hat from time to time. The following systems are the fundamental foundation for creating a business where people are self-motivated to be, and do, their best:

- First Employee Development Meeting
- Ongoing Employee Development Meetings
- Primary Aim
- Employee Development and Problem Resolution System
- Self-Perception Enhancement
- Key Frustrations Process

Employee Development Implementation Process

Adapt the systems in this process to your business

Set the due date for implementing Employee Development Meetings

Train managers

Conduct first Employee Development Meeting with all employees

Conduct regular, ongoing Employee Development Meetings with all employees

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Putting the Pieces Together™

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Making Good People Better

Remember the principle of systemization – that E-Myth Point of View that says your business should be systems dependent and not people dependent? While this is true, let's get something straight. Even if you created the most sophisticated systems in the world, you still need qualified, committed people, not only to use those systems, but to improve them. That work is ongoing.

Systems are not designed to wring the humanity out of your company. Rather, they free you and your people from daily concerns like, "How do we make a sale today? How do we answer telephone inquiries? How do we delegate?" Your systems tell you how. With systems in place, everyone can focus their creative energies on "How can we do it *better*?" rather than, "How do we *do it*?"

Certainly, one of the most important areas you need to put your attention to is creating a work environment where your people can grow with you as they help your business grow.

The fact of the matter is: you can't motivate your people to do anything. If you want it done, you're going to have to create an environment in which "doing it" is more important to your people than not doing it. Where doing it well becomes a way of life for them.

People development has everything to do with creating a workplace where people motivate *themselves* to do it well, where they feel valued for doing it well. And, where they're constantly looking for ways to move beyond their limitations to do it better.

Systems development is really the easier part of business development. When it comes to *people* development, get ready to face some exciting challenges.

We're More Alike than Different

Despite all our individual differences, deep down inside, people are people.

Like you, your people have their own Primary Aims and personal objectives, their own goals, dreams, and aspirations.

Although they may not have spelled these out as clearly or as consciously as you have, they all have them. And they keep searching for a workplace that satisfies at least some of these spoken or unspoken desires.

Like you, they're looking for a place that will challenge them with meaningful work, work that will call them to go beyond their self-imposed limitations... and in a place that will teach them how to confront everyday problems and frustrations in a constructive way.

And like you, they want an amiable, fair environment that recognizes and rewards them for their accomplishments and offers them opportunities to advance and grow.

You want these things; so do they.

If your business is going to find and keep quality people, you must learn how to address these needs. In other words, you must become an effective "E-Myth Mentor."

What Mentoring Really Means

Have you ever found yourself "burning the midnight oil" trying to answer the questions, "How can I motivate my people? What can I do to entice them to be more productive?"

You're not alone. Many managers have been misled by this "myth of motivation." Raise their salaries, install new carpeting, throw a party – morale and productivity will skyrocket! Or so some people think.

While money, carpets, and parties are fine, they don't do the job in the long run. Even before the money is spent, the smell of new carpet fades, and the party becomes a vague memory, people are back to doing what they did before.

Our experience tells us consistently that you can't motivate anybody to do anything. Motivation is a self-initiated drive, an internal spark that must already live inside someone before it can burst into flames of enthusiasm and productivity.

To find out what lights people's fires, you're going to have to stretch beyond your present role. An E-Myth Mentor is someone who can do that. A person who coaches and guides people not only to *do* their best, but to *be* their best.

The E-Myth Mentor recognizes the wisdom in the old adage: "Nothing succeeds like success."

Create an environment in which people can be productive – as workers *and* as people – and they'll fan their own fires. In fact,

highly motivated people will be knocking down your door to work for you.

The Employee Development Meeting Is a Mentoring Vehicle

One of the most effective ways to practice mentoring and coaching your employees – and thus create a highly motivating, productive environment – is through The Employee Development Meeting.

This is a meeting that your managers hold weekly with each of their reporting employees. It's done individually, face-to-face. It's scheduled in advance, and is a top priority of everyone's work week. It's not something you hold just "when you're in the mood" or if there's nothing else on the calendar. And it's not something you hold "only if there's a problem." When implemented regularly and faithfully throughout your company, it will become the backbone of your management system.

The Employee Development Meeting is:

- A forum for discussion, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and planning that leaves your employees feeling listened to and empowered to take action;
- A routine time to discuss current work in order to: make agreements for work to be accomplished, prioritize and discuss any exceptions, exchange substantive information, clarify procedures and results, and conduct other follow-up related to current work;
- A coaching session that helps people stay on a productive track;
- An opportunity to guide your people toward their Primary Aims and their personal and professional objectives, so their experience in your business becomes more positive and meaningful;
- A way to recognize people as people, not just as successful employees;

and most important of all:

- The vehicle for helping every person in your company face and overcome the real-life issues that get in the way of being the best they can be.

Imagine the power and impact of a meeting that creates true growth for each and every employee, as well as better results for the business!

But how are you going to find the time for all these meetings? Don't worry – time will find you because, ultimately, Employee Development Meetings are time-savers.

- Employee Development Meetings cut down daily interruptions.

Since your employees know they have weekly time with you, you can encourage them to batch most problems and questions until then. No more knocking on your door or tackling you in the hallway with unnecessary interruptions.

- Employee Development Meetings follow an agenda to keep the meeting focused.

You and your employees identify important areas to be discussed *beforehand*. When you come to the meeting, you've both done your homework. You know what ground needs to be covered. No time wasted on tangents or irrelevant issues.

- Employee Development Meetings provide specific recommendations for follow-up.

Whether your employees are having difficulty with a work activity or reacting negatively to a new policy, you have an opportunity to address these issues before they become serious problems. You'll be able to create appropriate plans with them to eliminate any obstacles in their way – saving time and energy for both of you!

Likewise, you can commend them for successes they've had, coach them on new skills, or help them integrate their personal goals with your company's goals.

- Employee Development Meetings help people develop the ability to make better choices and decisions.

One of the most common frustrations of business owners and managers is their feeling that employees don't think the way they think and, therefore, often make choices and decisions that range from barely adequate to completely unacceptable. Double the time and effort then go into 1) correcting the "mistake" and 2) explaining to the employee what was "off" and how to do it better next time. In these situations, however, very little learning usually happens because there are too many emotions in the way: the manager's anger and frustration, the employee's embarrassment and defensiveness.

The Employee Development Meeting is an excellent forum for taking advantage of the mistakes and misjudgment that are bound to happen, and use them productively to truly

teach and guide people so that they make better and better decisions, in both work-related and interpersonal arenas.

Whatever result you're pursuing, the Employee Development Meeting moves you and your employees one step closer to the satisfying, motivating work environment that most people dream of, but few ever experience. Certainly, a worthwhile investment of your time.

Substance and Spirit

You must understand and integrate both the *substance* of the Employee Development Meeting and the *spirit* of it. Either one without the other won't work.

Substance refers to the actual content of your Employee Development Meetings. Spirit means taking on a new picture of what it means to be a manager, an E-Myth Manager: one who recognizes that the role is to get results *through* other people and that the way to do this is to be a true mentor who helps people move beyond their limitations to be the best they can possibly be. Every manager in your company must strive to embody this model, both the substance of it and the spirit of it.

Starting Off with Real Impact



Ask managers what they would like to do over again if given the chance and most often they'll say, "I wish I could go back to the beginning with my employees and get off to a better start!" Being as clear as possible from the very beginning, giving your employees the picture of exactly what you expect from them, what they can expect from you, and the basis for your relationship, sets the stage for working together in a way that can produce great results.

The first Employee Development Meeting contains five key components. These will work, not only for brand new employees that you hire subsequent to implementing Employee Development Meetings in your company, but for current employees as well. Even employees who have been with your company for a long time. Don't think that, just because an employee has been with you and knows the way you've done things in the past, you can't get them off to a new start. You can. And with the exact same process.

1 Discuss the ground rules for your relationship. As employee and manager begin a new relationship, or engage in a new way, it's vital that they establish clarity about how they'll be working together. This part of the meeting covers three areas:

First, tell your employees what they can expect from you. Every manager must come to terms with what their employees can expect, but you should definitely include keeping your commitments, keeping employees well informed about anything that affects their job, and giving quick and direct feedback about employees' performance.

Second, tell your employees what you expect from them. What do you *really* expect from your employees? Have you ever thought about it, or do you operate under the assumption that "they know my expectations without my having to tell them." This is a mistake. Why keep them guessing? You'll get off to a cleaner start if you let them know exactly what your expectations are. You will most likely expect them to keep their commitments, to keep you informed about the status of their work and anything that may be affecting their performance, and to ask for help when they need it.

Third, ask your employees what they need from you to be their most effective. Not only will getting this information help you be a better manager, but it will help establish a relationship built on trust and open communication.

In fact, this entire section of the meeting – discussing the ground rules for your relationship – sets the best possible stage for working together in an authentic, trusting, and productive way.

2 Provide an overview of Employee Development Meetings.
Think of the Employee Development Meeting as one of the most fundamental and important management and people development systems in your business because, once you've completed and implemented this process, that's exactly what it will be!

You should explain it to employees in a very clear, direct, and uncomplicated way. You don't have to describe everything at this point; an overview will do. More and more of the picture will be filled in as you work together.

It's helpful to describe three facets of the Employee Development Meeting: 1) the purpose, 2) the logistics, and 3) the content of the meetings.

The purpose of Employee Development Meetings is to promote employees' professional and personal growth by working together (manager and employee) to overcome obstacles in the employee's way and to provide a place to be vulnerable, to take risks, and to learn so that the employee can become their best and produce excellent results.

Why is promoting the employee's personal growth part of the purpose statement? Because people's professional growth and personal growth are so closely intertwined, it's impossible to separate them. Managers who attempt to do so are only fooling themselves and creating an environment of detachment, which in the long run is counterproductive.

True, helping an employee improve some technical skill, like programming a computer, analyzing a financial statement, or fixing an engine may not have much to do with their personal growth. But this kind of professional growth is just the tip of the iceberg.

Most of your Employee Development Meetings will be spent on growth issues like helping people set priorities, plan their work to get the best results, understand why certain situations are more challenging than others and how to meet those challenges, and communicate better with customers and co-workers. You get the idea. These are areas where professional growth can come only through personal growth. And this list is endless.

As for logistics, the key items are how often you'll meet, for how long, where, and that this is a "one-on-one" meeting between an individual employee and his or her manager.

Although the content of what will be discussed at Employee Development Meetings is really unlimited, it's helpful to give employees a general picture of what to expect. Essentially, the content will include discussing work and administrative issues, personal and interpersonal issues, and coaching the employee to improve their work performance.

3 Review the employee's current work. Although specific work items should not be the main focus of this first Employee Development Meeting, you may take ten minutes or so to either discuss work that had previously been assigned or to assign and explain some new work.

4 Elicit the employee's Primary Aim. Having your employee's Primary Aim as the basis for your working relationship is essential for the "manager as mentor" model. It won't be at the forefront of your day-to-day work together, but it will always serve as the foundation for what's happening. This is because you want and need your employees to be committed to their work and to do whatever it takes to get the best results. They can only do this if they see the *connection* between what they do in their jobs and what they ultimately want for themselves in life. If employees are not in touch with what they

want their lives to express, their Primary Aim, then they have no basis for making this connection. And you, as the manager, need to understand the connection for each of your employees as well, so that you can provide the kind of coaching they need, move them past their obstacles, and keep them pointed toward what they want.

A full description of how to help someone discover their Primary Aim is in The E-Myth Mastery Program process called, Your Primary Aim (LD-0020), along with a set of worksheets. To refresh your memory, here is a summary of the benchmarks involved:

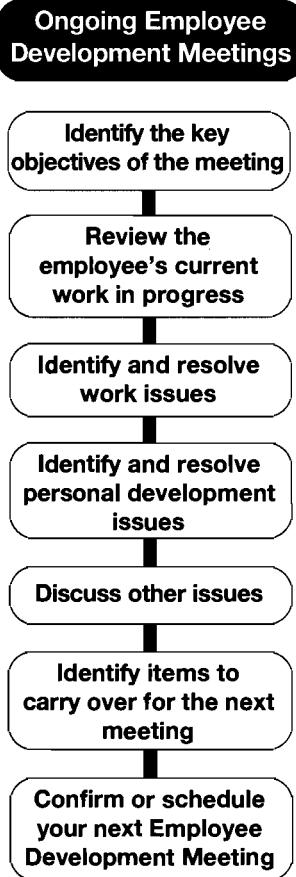
1. Identify what you don't want in your life. While focusing on what you don't want is not the most productive use of your time and energy, often it's necessary to "clear the way" before you can focus on what you do want.
2. Identify what you do want in your life. Get in touch with what's most important to you.
3. Identify the ideas or beliefs that are in the way of your getting what you most want. When people are honest with themselves, ideas and beliefs in the way will sound like statements such as, "It's selfish to go after what I really want." "People will hate me if I'm too successful." "I don't deserve it; I'm not good enough."
4. "Bust" the ideas that are in the way. Help people to see that these ideas and beliefs are not true, but are the remnants of negative messages we've carried with us since childhood. There's no reason these messages need to hold us back now.
5. Write your Primary Aim. Because it is a statement of essence, and not a detailed description of what you want your life to be like, the Primary Aim should be stated in no more than one or two sentences. If an employee is having difficulty stating his or her Primary Aim, an intermediate activity that can help is to write a eulogy. Again, the worksheets in Your Primary Aim are designed specifically to help managers help others dig deeply into what they truly want their lives to express.

After employees have a clear view of their Primary Aim (which may require waiting until your next meeting), ask them to complete a Personal Objectives Worksheet (also found in Your Primary Aim process booklet) within a week or two of this meeting. The worksheet gives them an opportunity to "log"

specific, tangible goals that will be the expression of their Primary Aim. And it will give you, as a manager, a better picture of the kind of professional development employees are interested in so you can help them work toward it.

5 Schedule your regular, ongoing Employee Development Meetings. Together with your employee, choose a day of the week and a time for your weekly meetings. Mark your calendars, at least for the next month. If any of the items from your first meeting did not get completed, make a note to put them on your agenda for your next meeting.

Employee Development Meetings That Transform



Now that you've laid a solid foundation in your first Employee Development Meeting with each employee, your ongoing meetings will give you the opportunities your employees need to really dig in to their issues and concerns and create solutions and strategies that work.

If both manager and employee hold the right spirit and intention, these meetings can be very alive, compelling, and productive. They can give people a whole new outlook on what "business" meetings are all about. They can create a true sense of cooperation, trust, and purpose. They can engage people in a way that's rarely seen in a business setting.

If either party, however, is "just going through the motions," it just won't work. The meetings will be sterile and mechanical, and probably very frustrating for one or both of you. If an employee is not participating fully in the Employee Development Meetings, you have a serious problem that needs to be dealt with directly.

It's essential to prepare a written agenda before each Employee Development Meeting. This will give you a place to capture discussion items between meetings and help you keep the meetings on track. Use the agenda example and agenda worksheet in the back of the process to help you.

Let's take a close look at the components of the meeting.

1 Identify the key objectives of the meeting. Do this before the meeting to be sure you keep your eye on the main purpose of the meeting and don't get lost in less significant details. Let your employee know at the start of the meeting what the key objectives are and get his or her agreement.

Also, give an overview of the specific agenda items as they relate to the overall objectives, and ask the employee if they have any specific objectives or agenda items to add. You may need to modify the agenda based on your employee's input. But use your judgment and experience to determine which items are most important.

2 Review the employee's current work in progress. This part of the meeting gives both you and your employee a chance to discuss current work activities. For instance, she just implemented a new computer program and you want to find out how effective it is. Or, he's testing a telephone script to screen applicants for a position opening you've advertised. Where are they in the process? Will they meet a specific deadline? What help do they need to facilitate their progress?

The underlying message you want to convey is "I am here to help and support you."

3 Identify and resolve work issues.

4 Identify and resolve personal development issues. These two benchmarks are the heart of your Employee Development Meetings. This is where you can truly be a mentor. And this is where the transformation, or at least the seeds of it, occurs.

By the way, "issues" for discussion in Employee Development Meetings don't necessarily have to be negative issues. You could, and should, discuss work and personal development successes, like how the employee exceeded a customer's expectations, new learning that was accomplished, finishing a project ahead of schedule, and the like. Discussions such as these can help reinforce learning and productive behavior and are frequently the source of new and improved systems in your business.

Another important area for Employee Development Meetings is that of growth "edges." This involves identifying an area where the employee is ready to boost his or her performance to a higher level. If you're truly being a mentor, you won't leave it to chance or to the employee's own devices to determine how this growth will take place. Your expertise, objectivity, and desire to help others reach their fullest potential, together with the Problem Resolution System (reviewed later in this process booklet), can help your people achieve impressive results.

For the purposes of our discussion here, however, the addressing and resolving of work and personal development issues will revolve mainly around negative or problem issues needing resolution. But keep in mind as you're reading this section that it applies equally well to matters you could classify as "employee development."

When you're planning the agenda, it's often helpful to think of work issues as separate from personal development issues that might be getting in the employee's way. But there's no need to split hairs here. As we discussed earlier, there is often a gray area in terms of what's work and what's personal. And sometimes what may appear to be a work issue on the surface is really a personal issue in disguise. Is the fact that your employee panics whenever a deadline approaches a work issue or a personal development issue?

In general, you could say that work issues involve visible, tangible aspects of someone's work accountabilities, such as events related to customer commitments, product, service, equipment, staff support, and so forth. They could be one-time occurrences or habitual. We received damaged inventory, a customer called and complained about our service, the project is running late, reports are never turned in on time, our supplier is going out of business, sloppy work – these are all examples of typical work issues.

Personal development issues, on the other hand, tend to involve the qualities, characteristics, or feelings of the particular employee. Panic over deadlines, difficulty in setting priorities or managing time, poor communications skills, anger over another employee's promotion are examples that fall into this category.

5 Discuss other issues. Other issues may be new policies or procedures you want them to hear about from you. Or an update on the business' progress that might affect their position. Or a new project you're thinking about offering them. Whatever would be appropriate for a private discussion.

6 Identify items to carry over for the next meeting. Use this space on the agenda to record two things: items from this meeting's agenda that did not get completed and new topics that you want to cover at a later time. Writing them here ensures they won't get lost.

7 Confirm or schedule your next Employee Development Meeting. If you've established regularly scheduled

Employee Development Meetings with each employee, you will likely have the date and time of your next meeting already on your calendars. If so, confirm it with one another so there will be no room for error. Otherwise, schedule your next meeting now.

It's essential that your employees walk out of their Employee Development Meetings with a sense of being heard. A sense of having something positive and concrete to work on. A sense that you're both committed to making their work experience less stressful, more satisfying and more productive.

The Problem Resolution System



Surprisingly, the path to resolving both work issues and personal development issues is one and the same. You will use the Problem Resolution System, which is reviewed below and is fully documented in the Worksheets section, together with the Key Frustrations Process, which was discussed at length in The E-Myth Mastery process booklet of the same name.

There are some important distinctions to keep in mind, though. First, there is a distinction in where the accountability lies for solving the issue. In the personal development arena, the accountability to change and grow lies squarely on the employee's own shoulders. By definition, it can be no other way. You, as the manager, can suggest options and offer guidance and support; but the employee must make the commitment and be willing and able to change. With work issues, while the employee may, in fact, have all or much of the accountability for resolving the problem, it is possible for the manager or other employees to participate.

A second distinction lies in the level of empathy and sensitivity required by the manager. Personal development issues, because they tend to lie closer to one's core, require a nurturing approach, with heightened sensitivity and empathy. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't be direct, but you must combine your directness with caring, "big-heartedness," and a lot of room for employees to show their weaknesses yet still maintain their dignity.

You should demand excellence, but provide unconditional acceptance and kindness. In your heart you must be genuinely interested in your people, and ready to be their champion. Look at your people as "work in progress" and be willing to invest yourself in their development. See their potential and help them reach it, if they want to.

Now you're ready to do the most rewarding part of your job as a manager – helping your people transform themselves into the best they can possibly be.

Here's a review of the system you will use to do it, The Problem Resolution System. The benchmark numbers below correspond to those you'll find in the Worksheets section.

1 Identify the issue or problem to be addressed. Simply state it, directly and clearly.

2 Get acknowledgement of the issue and the need to address it. If you as the manager are raising the issue, the employee must willingly "admit" that the issue exists and that something needs to be done about it. Otherwise, you will end up having a very nice meeting – with yourself – for the next thirty minutes or so. In other words, if your employee refuses to engage with you in the issue, then *that* becomes the issue, rather than the one you originally had in mind. In the vast majority of cases, your employee will acknowledge the issue and is often relieved that you have brought it up.

If your employee is the one who brings the issue to the table – congratulations! Your relationship is on the right track. An employee's willingness to be vulnerable says a lot about both of you. Now it's your turn to acknowledge the issue and agree to work on it together.

3 Discuss the ideas you both may have about what is underlying the issue. Let your employee talk first here. There are a number of reasons why this is the best approach. You may have already drawn conclusions about the situation that, once you've heard the employee's perspective, you'll want to revise. It's amazing how much of the picture we miss in our natural desire to analyze and respond to what we see. Having your employee talk first gives you more information that will guide you in working through the issue most effectively. And it also increases the level of engagement of the employee by showing that you truly value what they think.

After the employee has finished, then you should acknowledge and respond to what they've said and add any insights you may have.

4 Get the employee's commitment to deal with the issue. This is the second decision point for the employee (the first one was acknowledging the issue to be addressed). Without the employee's agreement here, there can be no more forward

movement. If the commitment isn't forthcoming, you'll need to focus on why the employee won't deal with the issue and explore what's in the employee's way. Referring back to their Primary Aim and what they most want from life will be "a way in" to working with employees in these situations.

5 Create a plan to deal with the issue. Often, using the Key Frustrations Process will be an excellent way to reveal the true nature and impact of the problem and uncover a systems approach to resolving it. Add to this the knowledge and creativity of both you and your employee, and together you can create an inspired and effective solution to resolve the issue and free people to move beyond any current limitations.

Whether it turns out that you need a systems solution or a personal development plan, have the employee document the plan in writing and give it to you for your review. The plan should include the overall result that you're aiming for; the benchmarks or specific, sequential steps for achieving the result; reporting loops, which are benchmarks for managerial review during the course of the plan; standards that describe how the benchmarks will be done; and time frames that define exactly when each benchmark will be completed.

The written plan is vital. Without it, your best and most well intentioned efforts could be forgotten in a moment. And your ability to follow up and evaluate your employee's progress will be significantly compromised. It's also the most clear, complete way to communicate agreements.

If you follow this strategy in each of your Employee Development Meetings, not only are you teaching your people to resolve their problems systemically, but you're engaging them in building your business – system by system.

If you can't complete the plan within the scope of this Employee Development Meeting, either have the employee continue working on it on his own, or schedule additional time to work on it together.

6 Get the employee's commitment to implementing the plan. Here's the employee's final decision point of the meeting. If he won't make the commitment, either the issue won't be resolved or another alternative must be brought to the table.

7 Follow up on the plan. After this Employee Development Meeting is over and the written plan is complete, remember

to follow up with the employee within a relatively short period of time, to discuss how things are progressing.

8 Re-evaluate the employee's performance and results.
You also must continue to follow up and re-evaluate the employee's performance to determine if the plan is effective and if the desired results are being achieved. Is the plan being followed? How is the employee responding to it? Is the employee attaining, on a consistent basis, the agreed upon standard? Though developing your people is the heart of this process, when all's said and done, the result is where your focus of attention should be as a manager.

Most managers don't particularly enjoy confronting people's sub-standard performance issues or negative feelings. But the task is much less daunting when you follow the process we've just described. Not only do you help them focus on what can be done to alleviate frustrations, but you help them devise a concrete solution that will turn the negative into the positive.

Teaching your people the skill of systemic and results-oriented thinking and problem solving not only makes them more valuable and productive employees, but gives them a strategy they can use in many areas of their lives. Let them know that when issues or frustrations arise at home, with family or friends, they also can separate personalities from problems by asking: "What's missing here that's allowing this situation to occur? How can we solve this problem together?"

Work skills are life skills. So you're creating a motivational environment where people can learn what it takes to become a more effective person, not just a more effective worker.

Self-Perception Enhancement

Just as you don't need to be an accountant to understand the finances of your business, you don't need to be a psychiatrist to understand the essentials of what makes people tick.

The simple fact is that people yearn to feel good about themselves, to like themselves and, yes, even to love themselves. But too often, unfortunately, the world sends contrary messages – messages that say "you're not good enough; you're unworthy; you're unlovable." And what's more unfortunate is how seriously, how much to heart, we take these messages. What all of us need is more messages that help us get in touch with the reality of what's wonderful about ourselves.

What people need is to develop a healthy mistrust of their negative conclusions about themselves, each other, and the world.

You can help your people see what's best in themselves by learning and practicing "self-perception enhancement" techniques. These simply are ways of reinforcing your employees' positive perceptions of themselves. There are four specific ways that you can do this.

- **Offer employees unconditional acceptance.** This is a stance that says, "No matter what you do, I will always value and support you. Your behavior may not be acceptable at times, but you can change your behavior. Your essential qualities are the constant that I honor and respect."

Unconditional acceptance results in a solid, trusting, employee-manager relationship in which employees feel *safe* enough to take risks and secure enough to do their best. It's a myth that people perform best under pressure; we actually do our best, generally speaking, when we are relaxed.

- **Insist on excellence.** When your employees know that you expect them to strive for and attain excellence, it sends the message that "I am capable of it and I'm too good a person to settle for less."

- **Define and enforce standards.** Standards enable people to understand exactly how they are being evaluated and what kinds of behavior are both acceptable and unacceptable. They provide your people with a sense of security and independence, because they take the guesswork out of day-to-day activities and allow people to move freely within the defined parameters without having to constantly look over their shoulders, fearing someone might catch them doing something wrong.

Standards help communicate the "rules of the game" of your company; and people always perform better when they know the rules. Employees will rise to your high standards if you give them a chance.

- **Praise employees' positive *attributes*,** rather than performance or results. Tell your employees that you appreciate them not only for the work they do, but for the person they are that made the result possible.

Consider this: Most managers, in a sincere desire to give their employees positive feedback, frequently use such

statements as, “You’re doing great,” or “That was a job well done.” While these may sound constructive, it’s too easy for people to disassociate the performance or the result from their own value as an individual. In other words, people’s internal response to, “that was a job well done” is often something like, “anybody could have done it as well or better than I did,” or “I guess I got lucky that time,” or even “the work’s not really as good as my manager thinks it is.”

But, it’s much more difficult for the mind to disassociate itself from *attributes* because they are intrinsic to a person, rather than external. So instead of “That was a great job you did,” you should give feedback like:

“I really appreciate your *creativity* in approaching client problems;” or

“You showed exceptional *discipline* and *intelligence* in the way you prepared that report;” or

“Your *determination* and *attention to detail* were critical to the success of this project.”

Good judgment, reliability, forward-thinking, resourcefulness, control, caring, quickness, thoughtfulness and openness, in addition to the italicized words above, are all examples of what we mean by personal attributes. And there are many, many more. When you give your employees positive input by focusing on attributes they possess, you can achieve some dramatic results.

And don’t forget to pass along this kind of positive feedback from others, including coworkers, managers, customers and the like. For example, “Mr. Brooks told me that you were extremely *patient* and *helpful* when he was trying to choose the right merchandise. He really appreciated it.”

Maybe no one else had ever told them they had those positive characteristics. And, until you pointed them out, maybe *they* didn’t even realize it!

After you communicate to employees in this way, now guess what they’ll continue to develop? Their creativity, patience, determination, concern for detail, and all those qualities that will serve as pillars of strength as they venture out to improve in other areas as well and to produce the best possible results in your business, day after day.

It can happen all the time. But you must make it happen.

Years ago, the head of a human resources department who was particularly skilled in using self-perception enhancement, told one of her employees: "You write and speak so clearly. You have such a logical mind."

The employee was astounded. Although she has been an educator for many years and had worked successfully in a variety of business environments, no one had ever told her she had those attributes. She repeated the message, "I write and speak clearly. I have a logical mind," over and over to herself. Immediately, she began to capitalize on these qualities in every area of her work. And now, years later, not only is she still reaping the benefits, but she is a much sought after writer and professional public speaker, and is using these life-transforming self-perception enhancement techniques with other people.

We have all seen the effects of "low self-esteem," whether in our families, our workplace, our community, or in the news. It produces the kind of self-defeating behavior people resort to when they don't value themselves, consciously or subconsciously.

But has it ever occurred to you that the kinds of behaviors you're most likely to complain about in your employees, such as chronic absenteeism or tardiness, uncooperativeness, slipshod work, and the ever-popular "cynical attitude," are most often seen in people who, deep down inside, don't value themselves? Maybe they were never taught how.

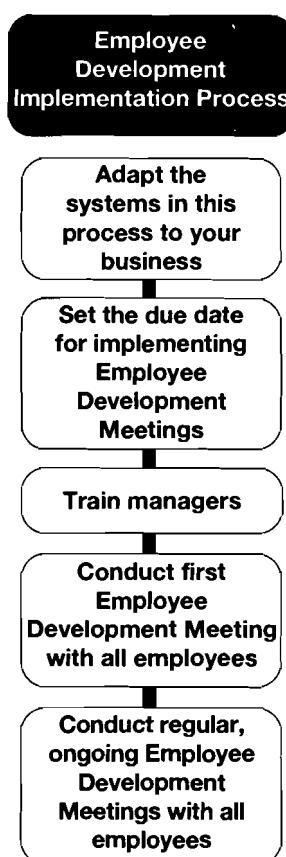
People whose prevailing view of themselves is negative will rarely reach their fullest potential, will always find ways to sabotage their own, and the company's performance causing, the results in your business to suffer. On the other hand, people whose prevailing view of themselves is positive can be counted on to do their best, to face new and challenging situations with confidence, courage, and optimism, and to make the kind of contribution that helps your company, as well as themselves, grow and flourish.

Although you can't change people unless they want to change, and you can't force people to think well of themselves, you *can* help your people re-direct their subconscious view of themselves from a predominantly negative self-perception to a predominantly positive one. As you practice these self-perception enhancement techniques and use them more and more as an integral part of your employee development system, you will be rewarded, not only with better results in your business,

but also with the sense of self-satisfaction that so many managers believe is missing from their professional lives – the knowledge that they are helping their people grow and become their best.

Bringing Mentoring to Your People

We've covered a lot of territory in this process so far: what it means for a manager to be a mentor; the logic behind Employee Development Meetings; how to conduct your first Employee Development Meeting and ongoing ones; and how using the Employee Development and Problem Resolution System and Self-Perception Enhancement techniques can transform people. Now let's look at how to pull it all together and implement these systems in your business.



1 Adapt the systems in this process to your business. As you reflect on the tools we've offered in this process, decide whether you'd like to change or add to them, based on the particular characteristics of your business, your employees, or other knowledge, experience, and techniques you bring to the table. Use the worksheets to create your own customized versions of the first Employee Development Meeting Agenda and the ongoing Employee Development Meeting Agenda. You may even want to modify the Employee Development and Problem Resolution System, but we strongly advise against leaving anything out of the model provided.

2 Set the due date for implementing Employee Development Meetings. Select and write down the date when you and all your managers will begin implementing Employee Development Meetings, as well as using the tools and techniques we've discussed as part of those meetings and as part of your managerial repertoire. In other words, make the commitment now, and stick to it. But be creative in deciding what will work best in your environment. For example, you may decide that the business owner will start implementing the process first and other company managers will begin later. Or you may decide to start with one department and phase in other departments over time. Or, of course, you may launch it company-wide.

3 Train managers. Training your managers in employee development is critical to the success of your implementation of this process, not to mention the success of your business. Because what we've described here may be very new and different for your managers, well-conceived training will help

them learn and assimilate these new concepts and techniques with the least amount of apprehension and the highest amount of acceptance. Even if these ideas are not new to your organization, training is vital to the consistency of application throughout your company. Every manager must implement it in the same way, week after week, year after year, until you decide to change it. It is a system in your business, part of the inviolable rules of your game. Not the easiest system to implement, to be sure, but one that, if implemented with intention and spirit, will yield incredible results.

4 Conduct first Employee Development Meeting with all employees. Managers conduct this meeting when employees are first hired. And managers conduct this meeting with existing employees that report to them.

5 Conduct regular, ongoing Employee Development Meetings with all employees. Schedule weekly, bi-monthly or monthly employee development meetings. In most cases, weekly is suggested, but that may be too frequent for some positions such as field sales personnel.

A sample *Training Plan for Managers* is included on page 30 of the Worksheets section.

Everyone Wins

It's no secret that business meetings can be a colossal waste of time, money, and energy. So few managers have mastered the skill of conducting productive meetings that employees often leave them with more frustrations than they had when they arrived. And so do the managers.

It's also no secret that relationships between employees and their managers are often more "formality" than real give-and-take, more annoying than productive, and more intrusive than freeing.

But it doesn't have to be that way. By adopting the "manager as mentor" model presented here, and the agendas and techniques for Employee Development Meetings, you and every manager in your business can free your people to move beyond their limitations and help them grow to be their absolute best. You'll be the coach who teaches them how to handle problems and frustrations in a healthy, constructive way, and the master creator of an environment that addresses employees' needs for recognition, for meaningful and challenging work, and for personal and professional growth.

And all of these benefits will come back many-fold to you and your managers, as well as your employees. Your company will distinguish itself as a place where people at every level *want* to work, not where they *have* to work.