



# ENTREPRENEUR'S CORNER

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## How to Keep Workplace Energized as Your Company Grows

by Jack Roseman

Motivated employees are at the heart of any entrepreneurial organization. In a two- to 12-person company, it's not hard for employees to feel a sense of ownership and see the impact they are having on the company's success. But as a company grows, it's easy for the CEO to allow them to drift into experiencing their work as just a job-and that's something a growth company can't afford.

In the Executive Entrepreneurship Program at CMU, we tell participants- and these are all owners of companies in the \$1 million to \$75 million range-that Fortune 500 companies can afford to have employees work 40-hour weeks. But in entrepreneurial companies, you must always try to have them working for you 24 hours a day.

So how do you get people to work for you 24 hours a day? There were times when I would wake up in the middle of the night and realize what we

should have been doing at work. I wanted my associates to have the same experience.

So how do you maintain that kind of atmosphere? The easiest way I know is to ask people who now own companies to think about when they used to work for somebody else. Did they ever have a good job? Then I ask them to identify what they liked about that job. They talk about having a lot of responsibility, being respected, being trusted, having their work reviewed, acknowledged, and appreciated. They talk about learning on the job, that their work was interesting, that it was a "fun" place to work.

So I say to them, "OK, now that you're the CEO, why don't you create the same kind of atmosphere for the people who work with you?" And that's usually a revelation because somehow we change when it's our company, we forget what we enjoyed when we worked for others.

A common mistake CEOs make is to think that money is the only or most important issue to an employee. When I was the CEO of Online Systems, I had a motto: "No one leaves this company for money. No one."

Now obviously, on occasion, some people do. But I truly believe that 90 percent of the people who do leave a company do it for some other reason. It sometimes appears to be money because if they're unhappy at the job for some other reason, then a 10 percent raise or 15 percent raise will be enough to entice them to jump ship. But if they're really happy at the job, no one's going to hire your people away for 10 or 15 or even a 20 percent raise.

This is especially true in high technology where these guys are getting \$50,000, \$60,000, \$80,000 a year. Why would they leave? For a 10 percent raise? I doubt it. If they leave, it is more likely because they were not being treated

right. They leave because you are not motivating them.

Another mistake CEOs make is when you have someone who is borderline, they tend to want to keep that person on for a while longer. And a while longer. The fact of the matter is that you're doing no one a favor that way because not only does that job not get done, but it distracts other people. It generates resentment and a lot of other negative emotions. It brings morale down. A major issue in a company is: Do people enjoy working with the people around them? One of the first questions you should be asking when you hire people is: Would this person be fun to work with? Forget for the moment how capable the person is. Because if he or she is not a fun person to be around, I don't care how capable he is or she is, who needs it?

In fact, another motto I used to have was: "If you're not happy working here, do me a favor- leave. I don't care how good you are." I always wanted people to have fun. When you have fun, you're excited. And when you're excited and you feel it's your company, you're going to work whatever hours it takes to get the job done and you're going to have however much energy it takes to work those hours.

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