



By Mac McIntire

Ten Ways to Stimulate Peak Performance in the Workplace

Managers can learn a great deal about motivation and productivity by understanding why athletes will work so hard in a "sweat shop" environment while managers typically have difficulty motivating employees in air conditioned, ergonomically designed offices. This article outlines ten elements from the sports world that, when implemented in the workplace, stimulate greater levels of performance from employees.

With only 3:57 remaining in the 1980 Holiday Bowl between Southern Methodist University and Brigham Young University, SMU was ahead 45-25. The fans were starting to leave, figuring there was no way SMU could lose.

On the following series BYU drove the length of the field and scored on a pass from Jim McMahon to Matt Bragga. BYU attempted a two-point conversion, but failed. On the kickoff BYU got the ball back with an on-side kick. Several plays later McMahon threw a forty-yard pass to Bill Davis, who was forced out of bounds on the one-foot line.

On the next play BYU scored again, this time succeeding in the two-point conversion. The score was now 45-39 with less than two minutes to play.

An attempt at another on-side kick failed. SMU now had the ball, forcing BYU to use its last time out as SMU let the clock run to the maximum on four plays before punting. Through amazing effort BYU blocked the punt and got the ball back at midfield with only eighteen seconds remaining in the game.

On BYU's first play after the blocked punt, McMahon, scrambling under tremendous pressure, was forced to throw the ball away. Now only eleven seconds remained. On the second play he threw the ball out of bounds. Three seconds remained.

After taking the next snap, McMahon dropped back farther than usual allowing receivers to get completely downfield. Then he threw a high, sixty-yard bomb right in front of the goalposts. All-Amer-

ican tight end Clay Brown, alone and surrounded by three SMU defenders, leapt into the air, no time remaining on the clock, and brought down the pass. Touchdown!

The astonished fans went wild. Against all odds and through unyielding effort BYU had won the game.

As a management consultant I've tried to imagine what our businesses would be like if the energy and enthusiasm exhibited by amateur athletes could be instilled into today's paid workers. Envision how wonderful it would be if we could create a strong employee offense capable of aggressively competing in the global market. Imagine having workers who demonstrate their commitment and spirit by rallying to defend the company against an onrush of tough competitors. New heights in quality and service would be reached as employees strive for "world records" in service excellence. Company profits would soar as corporate team members labored in a unified effort to be number one in the industry.

As I work with managers throughout the country I find many of them are frantically searching for ways to motivate their employees to greater levels of performance. They often ask, "How can I get people to *want* to work?" "How can I get workers to be enthusiastic about their jobs and committed to achieving the goals of the organization?" "How can I get my employees to give the extra effort

needed in today's competitive environment?"

I tell managers they can create a work environment where employees achieve the same remarkable levels of performance that athletes display when they "work." They can get employees to be just as excited about reaching company goals as athletes are when they make a touchdown, score a run or break par.

Unfortunately, in many American businesses we see just the opposite happening. Instead of being models of achievement, many employees show little enthusiasm, energy or commitment at work. Yet these same individuals will dash out of the building when the five o'clock whistle blows, they'll quickly change into their sports attire, and then they'll play an exhausting game of basketball or tennis in the hot, sweltering sun. Although these employees may show little loyalty to their work team their devotion and dedication toward their bowling or softball team is unlimited.

Almost miraculously, within minutes of leaving work, we see people change from employees who are reluctant to take the slightest risk into undaunted Olympians who push themselves to the limit mentally and physically in sports. At work they may hesitate to engage in strenuous labor, yet in sports they charge forward with focused determination, playing even when seriously ill or injured.

What causes employees to change so quickly from unmotivated, unenthusiastic workers into intense athletes with a compelling

drive to win? Or perhaps more important, what causes motivated athletes to become unmotivated employees once they get to work?

Obviously there must be something about the sports world that can miraculously resurrect dead employees once they get on the sports field. There must be some element that instantly transforms unmotivated employees into highly energized athletes.

The secret to instilling enthusiasm and commitment in employees lies in discovering why people will work harder at *play* than they work for *pay*.

A careful analysis of the sports world reveals ten motivational elements that cause athletes to fervently commit their energy to achieving the goals of the team.

Charles A. Coonradt has explored five of these elements in his book, *The Game of Work*. I have added five additional insights to his observations.

As we explore these motivational factors we'll see how companies can achieve amazing new heights in human performance by implementing these factors into the workplace. Managers who use these winning elements in the workplace will find themselves leading teams of highly energized employees.

CLEAR GOALS

In business, as in sports, it's impossible to play the game if you don't know what the goals are or how the game is played. The first and most important priority before every athletic event is to make sure **the goals are clearly defined**.

In sports every player knows what the goals are. They know which direction they must head in order to score. They know exactly what it takes to win.

Athletes also know that the goals and rules are specific to the game being played and are essential for success. Because they know

this, athletes don't spend time or energy debating the fundamentals of the game or trying to alter them. Rather than arguing about how to improve the *game*, they focus on improving *themselves* and their ability to play the game.

In contrast to this many employees in the workplace are often confused about even the most basic of job issues, such as why they are there, what they're to do, and how they're to do it. Instead of confidently working toward the company goals the employees struggle as they try to define what type of "game" they're being asked to play. Unfortunately, while they're trying to figure out how to score in their position, wiser competitors increase their lead in the market because their employees are focused on the goals.

Recent studies suggest some employees spend up to 50% of their time just trying to figure out what the boss wants. This means a large portion of their workday is spent in non-productive work effort as they focus on tasks *they* think are appropriate. Unfortunately, employees may miss the real priorities of the company, resulting in wasted time and resources as company workers wander around the corporate playing field.

In another article I wrote, entitled "*How to Develop Competent Employees*," I said "the simple act of providing workers with clear information about the goals of their job has more potential for creating competent employees than any other strategy."

When goals are clearly defined, objectives set, and working parameters established, employees confidently step forward and accomplish valuable results. When these things are in place employees feel sure and secure in their role. They feel more comfortable making decisions, solving problems and taking risks because they know how to play their position and win in their job role.

CLEAR BOUNDARIES

In sports **the playing field is clearly marked**. Players can tell immediately when they step out of bounds or hit the ball out of play. Since the rules and boundaries are clear, the athletes recognize their error, reposition themselves on the field, and adjust their performance themselves. No coach has to rush out on the field to discipline them for stepping out of bounds. Having been temporarily delayed in their forward progress, the players take corrective action *themselves* and the game continues without delay or dispute.

Corporate managers can learn two lessons from the sports world about the importance of clear, consistent, well-marked performance expectations and boundaries.

First, in sports it doesn't matter how close a person comes to the out-of-bounds line as long as they remain in bounds. As long as they stay within the set parameters and are moving toward the goal the worker's performance is acceptable and worthy of praise. Even "borderline" performance is satisfactory and should be cheered.

Second, going out of bounds on occasion is an expected outcome when driving toward the goal. Temporary setbacks and inadvertent breaches of the boundaries are anticipated hazards for championship teams. Sports teams don't spend energy punishing those who go out of bounds. They just get back on the field and keep playing.

The game plan of successful coaches, and successful supervisors, is not disrupted by minor delays. Winning teams concentrate on moving the ball forward ten yards, not the entire length of the field. They realize large goals are accomplished in small steps. Most of the time their team will move forward, sometimes they'll move laterally, and occasionally they may be pushed back; but

the team persistently maintains its momentum, knowing they have four plays (or quarters) to accomplish their task. Good coaches and managers don't sweat infractions. They take the necessary corrective action and move on.

Athletes can score because the goals and boundaries are clearly defined. When they know where the boundaries are they can use the entire field and run a variety of plays, all designed to move the team toward the goal. With a view of the larger field they can design multiple options to move them toward the goal.

Without clear boundaries, employees typically perform on a much narrower playing field. Employees who are not sure whether they have authority to make a decision usually don't. If it's unclear whether or not management wants a person's input, employees usually keep quiet. Unfortunately, at times when the employees could help their companies improve, they hesitate to share their insight because they're not sure whether they will be out of bounds by pointing out a company weakness. They limit their play options because they don't know where they stand on the playing field.

Even young kids playing sandlot ball realize that without a clear understanding of the playing field there's no motivation to play the game. The first priority in sandlot play after picking teams is to establish the goal lines, boundaries and rules of the game. No one wants to be confused about the goals, boundaries, or rules when they are earnestly trying to win.

Like athletes, employees need to know what is expected of them. They have to understand the goals and boundaries within those expectations to produce valuable results. In business or in sports, it's the disciplines of the game – the *rules and regulations* – that provide the incentive and motivation to play.

CONSISTENT RULES

In the business world a considerable amount of management time is spent *adjusting the goals to meet the behavior* of the workers. If an employee cannot achieve a specified performance standard, quite often the goal is lowered to a more attainable level. On the other hand, if someone exceeds his or her goal early in the year the standard is raised to "motivate" the employee to reach a higher performance level during the remainder of the year. Sometimes managers may even withhold the incentive bonus promised for achieving the original goal until the new target is attained. Amazingly the de-motivational impact this has on the employee somehow escapes the logic of the manager.

Imagine what would happen to the enthusiasm and commitment of a football player if, after intercepting a pass and sprinting down the open field across the goal line, he is told by the referee the touchdown is only worth three points because he got into the end-zone too easily.

Think how upset the team would be if the referee gave the opposing team ten points for their "effort" because they had to rush an additional twenty yards to make their touchdown.

Yet the performance appraisal system in many companies is often skewed by the employees' *effort* rather than his or her *results*. People are given credit for "working hard," though they accomplished nothing. Or, even worse, after having accomplished the objectives assigned to them, the worker's performance appraisal is less than expected because of some arbitrary reason.

In sports they **don't change the rules in the middle of the game**. A run is a run. A touchdown always equals six points no matter how easy or difficult it is to achieve. As a result, athletes concentrate on

adjusting their behavior to reach the goals. They know the goals won't change. Consequently they focus on improving their performance and abilities if they want to score more points. They know they must get better because the rules don't get any easier.

In sports it doesn't matter whether a person is an experienced or inexperienced player when it comes to achieving the goal. Everyone is measured by the same achievement. To win the person must score, and to score they must accomplish the goal. They are either competent or they are not. They either achieved the results or they did not. No credit is given for "loyalty" or how long they've been on the team.

Rules in the workplace must be consistent for all employees. They must be consistent between departments, on every shift, and for every individual, regardless of situation or circumstance.

Goals, too, must be consistent. They should be carefully established to ensure they are realistic, attainable, and challenge the workers' abilities. They should be set according to an unwavering standard of quality and service. No points should be given if the standard is not reached.

Once the goals have been set, they should remain unaltered until the end of the "season." Rule changes are negotiated during the off-season, not while the game is in progress. New employees need enough "playing time" to improve their ability to accomplish the goals. Managers, therefore, should concentrate on teaching the fundamentals of performance, rather than unnecessarily raising or lowering the standards to the current performance level of the employees.

Successful athletes know goals are reached through the fundamentals of good performance. The best players don't worry about making touchdowns. They concentrate on improving their

performance level and their physical endurance. They know the goals will be reached when they focus on the immediate tasks and ensure those tasks are done right.

If managers want to encourage their employees to strive for *higher* performance goals during the "season," they should provide the employees with performance feedback that induces the worker to raise their *own* performance standards. Employees who have data about where they stand in the "ratings" typically seek to improve their standing.

Almost every aspect of athletic competition is designed to allow the players to monitor, evaluate and alter their own performance as they strive toward the goal. Knowing where one is in their current performance and what must be done to achieve the goal provides the stimulus to work even harder. Real professionals always strive to be better at what they do.

As performance coaches, managers can help their employees achieve greater results by focusing less on goals per se and more on the fundamentals of performance.

To perform well, employees need goals that are consistent and unchanging. They need clear information on their current performance and how it relates to the goal. They also need help in developing the skills and abilities to do their jobs well.

FEEDBACK ON PERFORMANCE

Athletes continually improve their ability to play the game because in sports **feedback is more frequent and more specific to individual and team performance.**

Feedback is one of the most fundamental performance principles. It's also a vital human relations principle. Whether as athletes or employees, people need to know whether they are winning

or losing. Most humans want to improve. To do this they need personal feedback.

All employees want data about themselves – they want feedback. Don't believe it? Even the most hardened employee, who may adamantly resist supervisory counsel, stops to look in the mirror to receive personal feedback about his or her appearance. Even they know they need accurate information to become better.

Feedback in sports is so imperative the game is immediately stopped if the feedback mechanism (scoreboard) malfunctions. Everyone knows it's impossible to play without this vital information.

Both the players and spectators demand instant information about where they are in the game. They often become agitated if the umpire delays his decision for even a second. Athletes demand immediate information to make appropriate performance decisions. Continuous feedback drives their actions. They alter their plays based upon the information they receive about where they are on the playing field. That information drives their tactics, changes their strategies, and helps move them forward.

At work employees typically have to wait until the end of the year for an annual performance review to learn how well they are performing. Then they discover too late that they should have changed their performance tactics many months earlier. Unlike athletes who know they cannot make performance decisions without up to the minute information, many businesses seem satisfied to rely on outdated research, limited data, or hunches when making business decisions that have multi-million dollar implications.

The sports world offers continuous feedback regarding how well a player or the team is performing. Coaches provide team members with specific statistical data about each player's individual performance before and after each

game so the players can make the necessary adjustments to prepare for the next objective.

In sports, performance feedback is not limited to just that provided by the coach. Information comes from many sources in the athlete's "work" environment. Almost every element in the sports world is designed to provide clear information about where an individual is in his or her performance.

For example, the fullback on a football team can judge how far he carried the ball based upon the scrimmage line, the line marker, the hash marks on the field, the comments of the announcer, or the final placement of the ball relative to its position at the beginning of the play. When a golfer hooks the first shot fifty yards short of the green, she can evaluate what needs to be done on the next stroke to correct her performance. Baseball pitchers adjust their tactics after every pitch.

Athletes use feedback to help determine how they can change the outcome of the game by altering the level of their *own* performance. Players realize they can only win when they, and every member of their team, plays at their peak. Peak performance requires immediate feedback on how to improve one's performance.

As we can see, successful teams provide their players with immediate, frequent, and highly specific information about individual and team progress. They do not withhold information that is vital to winning.

Yet, in the business world managers often keep pertinent data from their employees under a false assumption that the workers don't need it or an apprehensive belief that the employees may use the information inappropriately. However I've found most employees have a tremendous capacity to interpret performance information and can be trusted to make sound

business decisions concerning their personal productivity.

Most people have an innate drive toward self-improvement. People want to be good at what they do. They want to know when they're winning and when they are losing. And most people don't like to lose. Businesses can tap into a reservoir of potential energy within their employees by providing workers with comprehensive performance information that tells them how to score. Management needs to give employees the vital information they require and trust that they will use the data wisely.

BETTER SCOREKEEPING

In the sports world [score-keeping is more objective](#). A goal is always a goal. The ball must go through the hoop to count. Close isn't good enough (except in horseshoes). A person either is competent or they're not. There's no such thing as almost being a national champion or almost making the winning touchdown. You must score to win, and only winners can be champions.

Things are different in the work world. Managers have been known to rate less competent employees as outstanding and reward people for goals not achieved in the false hope of motivating them to produce more. Not surprising, employees become discouraged and withdraw their extra effort when they see less committed workers receiving the same praise and rewards.

People want to be evaluated fairly for what they do. They want others to be rated by the same standards. They become demotivated when they, or anyone else, receive undeserved rewards. Unfortunately, few performance appraisals possess the objective integrity shown in the way athletes are evaluated.

Scorekeeping in sports is also more dynamic. You can always tell when someone scores because

lights flash, horns blow, cannons roar and fans cheer. Gigantic scoreboards display the results for everyone to see.

Dynamic scorekeeping creates an exciting and productive mood for everyone involved. Both those playing the game and those watching are emotionally committed when the score is prominently displayed.

The motivational value of seeing the score throughout the performance can best be understood by contrasting figure skating with ice hockey. The composed figure skater calmly follows the planned routine. The spectators passively watch until the performance concludes. Neither the skater nor the spectators know whether the performance is a winning one or not. Applause is held until after several tense moments the judges finally display the scores. Unfortunately, at that point the skater has no opportunity to improve his or her performance. In business this method of evaluation is called the annual performance appraisal.

The hockey arena presents a much different picture. Hockey players know immediately whether they are winning or losing. The scoreboard flashes the score, yelling fans loudly shout encouragement, and the players sense the urgency of their work as they jostle closer to the goal. With the clock ticking off the final seconds, they instinctively boost their performance level. In a sudden burst of energy they aggressively press forward in an all-out effort to win. Finally, with only seconds remaining on the clock, the players' united effort pays off as a desperate shot makes the winning goal.

Organizations can create the same dynamic, energized work environment by providing daily performance information to their employees. With this information the employees can review their score and know immediately

whether they need to alter their performance to accomplish the goal.

Managers would be even wiser to let their employees keep track of their own performance. Golfers keep their own scorecard, joggers set their own stopwatch, and successful teams keep individual statistics so each player can evaluate and upgrade one's own performance. Most athletes monitor their individual statistics so they have immediate information on where to improve their game. Although the scoreboard displays the team totals, most athletes are even more interested in knowing where they stand personally so they can do what is necessary to improve their performance. Joggers know how many seconds they need to trim off their time. Golfers know the score they must shoot to beat their best game. And every baseball player can tell you what it will take to achieve a .300 batting average.

In sports, players can easily compare their current performance to their performance in the past. They can evaluate their effort based on a set standard and know exactly how much further they must go to break the conference record or move into first place. Employees, too, will become industry "world" champions to the extent they are able to measure their accomplishments and adjust their performance accordingly.

SEE THE COMPETITION

In order to win you must be able to [see the competition and measure its performance](#).

In sports the players always know exactly where they are in relation to the competition. They are in the lead, even with the other competitors or lagging behind; and they adjust their strategy accordingly. Although the pre-race game plan may have called for the runner to sprint the last 400 meters, a runner will forsake her strategy if, late in the race, she finds herself further behind than

expected. By watching her competition, she makes tactical changes during the race in order to be first at the finish line, even if these changes require her to push herself beyond her physical capacity as she starts her sprint earlier than planned.

Front-line employees in many businesses often are unaware of who the competition is or where the company stands in the marketplace. They have no idea whether their daily work effort is pushing the company out in front of its competitors or causing the company to fall behind. All the workers know is that management seems to constantly badger them to produce more by complaining about the competitive opposition. But management seldom helps employees see where they are in the competitive race.

Managers I've worked with are perplexed when they experience the pressures of competition yet can't seem to mobilize their employees against this ominous threat. They get irritated that the employees don't appear worried about their own job security and seem oblivious to the perilous market position of the company. These managers expect the employees to commit themselves to a more fervent race even though they've never shown the employees the marketplace or where competitors are on the track.

Managers need to realize that there's something invigorating and energizing about competition. They need to allow their employees to experience it for themselves. They need to give employees a clear idea of who the opposing team is and where their own team stands in the competition. Teamwork and team commitment are enhanced when members of the team rally around the common objective of defending their market position against the onrush of their opponents.

THE GAME ENDS

Managers also need to be aware that it's a lot easier for employees

to commit their total energy to achieving the company goals when they know at some point [the game comes to an end](#). The fact that one game ends and another begins has significant impact upon how people perform. Athletes pace themselves, producing enormous amounts of energy over the entire length of the event, because they know there's a set amount of time in the game to achieve results. They'll push themselves to exhaustion and play while injured during the final minutes of a game because they know they can recuperate once the game has ended.

The National Football League conducted a study on scoring in the NFL and discovered that more points are scored in the last two minutes of each half than in any other *twenty-minute* period. Professional fund-raisers know nearly 80% of the money raised is gathered during the last few hours of the event. Items at the end of an auction are sold at higher prices. A fervor of excitement arises as people become motivated to solicit more, give more, or get more as the end of an event approaches.

Many employees in the workplace perform repetitive, ceaseless activities with no hope of reprieve from the process. Repetitive work, like a monotonous athletic event, is boring. People lose energy and excitement when a baseball game is deadlocked in extra innings from a never-ending tie. They no longer care who wins; they only want to bring the misery to an end and go home. No one can play forever. No one can maintain a high level of motivation forever.

Managers need to find ways to stop the work clock and assess the score. By marking production events with a beginning and an end employees will have the opportunity to measure their progress and recharge for the next production cycle.

Employees need to experience the emotion of making the game winning shot in the final seconds of production. They need to sense the

exhilaration of breaking the tape at the finish line. Workers need to feel the personal satisfaction of hearing the crowd cheer their accomplishments.

Managers can provide these motivational opportunities by breaking production schedules into set time periods with a definite beginning and an end. These types of experiences will induce employees to enthusiastically choose to work even harder. The best performance feedback mechanisms allow employees to measure their progress, celebrate their successes, and regroup before the next production event.

HIGH DEGREE OF CHOICE

Successful companies realize one of the greatest motivational factors in both the workplace and in sports is the [high degree of choice](#) participants have in the things they do. Joggers run long distances in the sweltering sun because they *want* to, not because they have to. Ballet dancers starve themselves because of a personal resolve to be the best, not necessarily out of devotion to their dance troupe.

Choice is the cornerstone of personal enthusiasm and commitment. Athletes and workers perform to their highest potential when they're doing what they've chosen to do, they're performing in areas where they have a natural talent or interest, and they're striving for goals they themselves have set.

In business, managers often make work assignments or give promotions based on what *they* feel is in the best interest of the individual or the corporation. They may fail to consider the motivational factors from the employee's perspective. The talents, abilities, interests or desires of the employee may be ignored when making the decision. Instead of keeping a competent technician in a technical slot, the manager may "promote" the employee to a supervisory position to motivate

her to even greater levels of performance. A talented secretary, presently satisfied with his current job responsibilities, may be given additional tasks outside his area of interest as a "reward" for his dedication. Yet, contrary to the manager's assumption, these new opportunities may result in job dissatisfaction for someone who liked the position they had before.

Managers are sometimes surprised when motivational efforts like the above result in decreased enthusiasm and commitment from their employees. Some businesses, like the military, have a knack for destroying individual motivation by making talented cooks drive trucks and skilled electricians guard airplanes.

Personal choice is a key to greater productivity. Choice builds ownership. When employees have a choice in their work assignments and are free to choose how they will accomplish the desired results, they exhibit greater commitment and work more diligently toward the company's goals. Employees who have a choice in their work produce more and tend to ask for more responsibilities and higher goals. *Winners* want to be in the game. They want to achieve better results. One conference championship is never enough. Continuous improvement is always a characteristic of winning players and winning teams.

REGULAR PRACTICE

Successful people know that to become a consistent winner in sports or business takes **practice, practice, practice**. A basketball player practices running, dribbling and shooting for hours, days, and weeks at a time for many years. A golfer practices driving, putting and getting out of sand traps over and over again. The number one team in the league continues to practice, striving to improve even more, despite their current standing. Even the best coaches pour over game films and playbooks, trying to hone their competitive edge.

Athletes know they cannot neglect their personal development for even a moment. They constantly workout and seek ways to increase their speed and efficiency. They test new plays, try different techniques, and alter their game plan according to the strengths of their team and opponents. They know their status as a player is contingent upon their continued ability to contribute to the team.

In the business world, some people consider themselves to be professionals just by virtue of the position they hold in a company. Once they've achieved a certain level in the organization they cease to develop their abilities. They act as if their role and skill requirements are constant. Having been in the position for some time, they feel they have mastered the fundamentals and have little more to learn.

Many managers, particularly executives, seem hesitant to continue their training. Perhaps they view further development as a sign of weakness or feel their time is better used working toward their business goals. Maybe they feel their present skills are still effective, even though the competitive environment is constantly evolving and technology is advancing at an accelerated pace. Or perhaps they feel they have mastered their people-skills and know how to manage employees, even though today's workforce is more diverse and complex.

Managers and employees need to realize that winning in the workplace requires constant improvement at every level of the organization. To have successful "seasons" in the competitive years ahead requires every member of the team to be proficient in the fundamentals of their position. To be a championship business team requires continuous study, constant practice, and the willingness to try new ideas and approaches in order to defeat the competition.

COACHES DON'T PLAY

Finally, coaches of winning teams understand well their coaching role. They know their job is to teach the players how to score and to cheer the athletes on as they strive toward the goal. Great coaches, whether in business or in sports, add to the excitement of working toward the results by showing their own enthusiasm and commitment toward the players.

The best coaches know **coaches don't play** – they coach. They don't substitute for the quarterback when he's injured, nor do they step in and take the penalty shot because they have greater experience or skill. Coaches call the shots from the *sidelines*. They don't step in and do the work because they know the *players* have to play the game. Their job is to teach the fundamentals and support the players as the players do the work.

Good coaches also know there's little time for corrective action or training during the game, so they take time during non-competitive moments to guide and counsel their team. Throughout the season they stress the fundamentals and provide constant instruction, support and encouragement. They train and retrain. They run through the plays as often as necessary to ensure success. Then they get out of the way and allow their players to learn through their own experience and practice.

Businesses win in the marketplace by getting the best performance from their workforce. High production levels are achieved when managers skillfully coach their employees on how to perform and then allow the workers to use those skills on the playing field. Managers need to "call the plays" and then let their employees play the game. They need to create opportunities that build self-confidence, competence and pride within the employees. They need to provide the employees with experiences that test their current abilities and challenge them to become better at playing their position on the shop floor.

The manager's position on the production playing field is on the sidelines *during the game*. Then, when the game has ended, the manager can either glory in the success of their championship team, or provide the coaching necessary to ensure a winning effort in the future. In either case, the best coaches know their job is to help their team become even better. Their job is to constantly provide the direction, feedback, training and encouragement necessary to ensure success in every game.

CONCLUSION

Managers can learn a great deal about motivation and productivity by understanding why athletes will work so hard in a "sweat shop" environment while the manager has difficulty motivating employees in air conditioned, ergonomically designed offices.

Managers can motivate their employees to greater levels of performance and instill tremendous enthusiasm and commitment in their workforce by establishing a work environment with the ten winning elements from the sports world outlined in this article.

Managers will be more successful in moving their team forward when they

- let their employees know what is expected of them,
- clearly define the goals and boundaries,
- consistently apply the rules,
- provide employees with dynamic, specific feedback on their performance,
- provide a clear perspective of the competition,
- promote celebrations at the end of each task,
- allow employees to have a high degree of choice in their work, and
- coach employees on how to become better while staying out of the action as much as possible.

Managers who do these things will find themselves managing highly energized, peak-performing work teams comprised of enthusiastic employees dedicated to winning at work. §

Innovative Management Group provides consulting and training on how to implement these ten motivational elements in the workplace. We show you how to create the performance management policies, procedures, processes, practices and systems needed to motivate your employees to high levels of productivity, enthusiasm and commitment. Please contact us at 307-789-3744 for more information or to receive an outline of the training workshops we offer on these ten motivational elements.

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