



By: John Stepnes

MANAGING THE HUMAN FACTOR IN LAUNDRY PRODUCTIVITY

How do we optimize the use of human resources in the productive process?

The most powerful resource that we have to help us accomplish our task of doing more with less is the people that we manage. All of us could improve our understanding and use of this—our most important asset. Our ability to manage is very closely tied to our ability to see and manage ourselves. We tend to see others as we see ourselves and we tend to manage as we have been managed. Our management training really began in our homes from our parents. Effective managers understand that the most important part of their job is to continue to learn more and more about themselves and the people they lead. What we have learned is that basically everyone is pretty much the same and just to the degree that we understand the individual, we can begin to understand and utilize this amazing resource—human beings.

To begin with, most of us see our people only as physical assets. Primarily, we see them as bodies and even refer to them as such or by some other abstraction, such as FTEs (full-time employees). The truth is, the people we lead are three-part beings with a mind characterized by the ability to pay attention, reason, and communicate; a body with the ability to move; and an emotional center with the capacity to care. Enrolling, involving, and utilizing all three parts of the people we lead provide the greatest opportunity we have to positively affect the space/time relationship of capacity and increase the efficiency of our operations.

Our success as managers is directly tied to our ability to recognize willingness on the part of applicants and then convert that energy into the intention necessary to help us fulfill our mission. Through the conditions we create and the training and feedback we provide, we expand the awareness and attention of the people we work with. It is by focusing the energy of intention and attention that we have our most potent force for expanding the space/time of productive capacity.

Recruitment and Hiring Practice

There have been libraries written on recruitment and hiring practices, so we will keep our comments on the matter to a minimum.

The most important recruitment practice that we can engage in is to create a great place to work. If we create an environment in which intention and attention are the ideals, where everyone has an opportunity to learn and to grow, where standards of excellence are meaningful, and recognition of achievement is accurate and equitable, we will be successful in our mission and have no trouble finding others who want to join our team.

In selecting associates to join the team, we encourage you to look for those who are the most open and willing. Look for people that are the most eager to participate and to grow. Be very skeptical of the ones that already know. Find the ones that believe in the possibility of unlimited abundance and never, ever hire a cynic.

To aid in the hiring process, we recommend that you use some or all of the following open-ended questions.

“What did you like/dislike about your last job?”

If the interviewee has negative comments about their last job or didn't like a particular style of work or communication, it should raise a warning flag.

“Describe a difficult problem you've had to deal with.”

The problem is not important, the way they handled the problem is. Did they follow company rules in dealing with the problem? Did they deal with it and put it behind them or did they let it continue to bother them.

“What do you think of your current or last boss?”

People who complain about their employers are recognized to be the same people who cause the most disruptions in a department.

“Describe a situation where your work or an idea was criticized.”

Listen carefully to the answer given. The person is being asked to describe in detail their faults and how responsive they are to recommendations for improvement. Remember, if you hire this person, you may well have to tell them to improve at some time. You are looking for someone who is willing to accept criticism and change his or her behavior.

“How do you get along with different kinds of people?”

You are really looking to see if the person has a team attitude or whether they are a loner.

“How important do you feel that team work is to the success of a business?” And the follow-up question: *“Give me an example of a team you worked on and how your effort contributed to the team success.”*

Once again, you are looking for their attitude about team work and their relevant experience working on a team.

Training

Training should be a continuous process and is an important element of the opportunity for continuous improvement.

Most of us find that we are too busy to train; and yet, a lack of training is one of the biggest reasons we are so busy. While we may not personally have all the requisite skills or knowledge to do a great job of training, we must provide high-quality training that is clearly understood and then verify for ourselves that the instructions have been understood by examining the results.

Perhaps we miss the essential point, that the work environment is really a school for all of the participants. While we recycle textiles for a living, there is a possibility to learn everything in this process. Just to the degree that we continue to learn ourselves and foster an environment in which everyone has the opportunity to learn and expand is the degree to which we have the possibility of this individual expansion. This individual expansion is both the possibility and the realization that doing more with less is the formula for abundance, personally and professionally.

When we design our training programs, some of the questions that we may ask are:

- What is missing and what is necessary for my people?
- What is the best resource to use to conduct the training?
- Does the trainer have a clear grasp of the subject matter?
- Are they sensitive to the audience? Are they patient and kind?
- Do they create the necessary atmosphere and provide the tools to make the training session most effective?
- Are interpreters provided?
- Does the trainer allow for questions and clearly answer them?
- Do we test in some way to determine if the message was heard and understood? The most effective way to test is to see if the trainee can do what is being taught. This can take many forms.

1 LL

Managing the Human Factor in Laundry Productivity

Earn one *Laundry/Linen* credit hour by completing the [quiz over the material](#) from this educational offering. To maintain ALM credentials, individuals must submit proof of continuing education in laundry & linen specific programs every three years. Access to contact hour quizzes are a benefit of membership in ALM.