



Focus | Human Resources

Classroom to boardroom

Educator boosts awareness of job morale

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Paulette Wagner is all smiles when at work or even when she's just talking about her work.

Something as simple as a smile can help keep a business in business, says the retired sixth grade schoolteacher turned entrepreneur who owns Prime the Pump Consulting, a company focusing on improving morale in the work place.

Looking every bit a fairy godmother from the hand-shaped porcelain lapel pin holding a magic wand she wears to the infectious smile she bears, "The Morale Fairy," as Wagner is otherwise known, has been spreading her uplifting message of job morale and staff placement and development since 1999.

With the current downturn in the economy that has many employers and employees grumpy and in jitters, Wagner believes her motivational presentations and life coaching techniques geared for human resource managers, CEOs, supervisors and business owners to help hire and retain personnel might be needed more than ever.

"Our morale as a nation is in jeopardy," she said.

Wagner, who also is a strategic business partner with assessment company Profiles International, said her keynote is teaching praise and respect "because those are what are needed to keep an organization from falling apart."

"The simplest and most effective way of letting people know they are appreciated and respected is to look them in the eye and smile," she said. "Positive, friendly greetings by bosses and managers lead to a more productive work place where workers feel appreciated and are willing to make the effort to do what is necessary. A smile from both employer and employee sets the tone for the whole work place."

A graduate of the CoachU training program for personal and business coaches as well as a graduate of the Business Assistance Center's Project New program, Wagner specializes in job morale along with ethics, networking and stress reduction. To get her message across, she uses a lifetime collection of anecdotes, jokes, tried-and-true methods and suggestions and resources in her seminars.

A native of New Jersey, Wagner was educated at Augustana College and Northern Illinois University. She and husband, Joe Wagner, a computer software specialist, moved to the Dallas-Fort Worth area from Chicago in 1984. Wagner launched Prime the Pump – Joe has a Web design and software solutions sideline in the business – nine years ago. She officially retired from teaching in 2000 after 28 years in public schools.

"I had no idea what I was going to do but I thought I was going to be a personal coach," Wagner said. "Joe chose the name for [the company] because the bottom line on it is getting your business and your personal life flowing."

Personnel evaluation needs is the mainstay of Wagner's business. With a battery of assessment instruments, Prime the Pump provides testing assistance and counseling for businesses regarding customer service levels, hiring and retention, and staff development.

[Overheard]

"Tell them that you appreciate them. It's not hard and it's worth the effort and the time because the companies who do it well are more successful. It becomes their reputation."

– Paulette Wagner, owner of Prime the Pump Consulting

FOCUS FIVE

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- 4 Political advocacy in the workplace
- 5 Employment law: Tail no longer wags the dog

NEED TO KNOW

FACT

The National Human Resources Association was founded in 1951.

FACT

There has been a 17-percent increase in human resource professionals who use social-networking sites for hiring.

FACT

More than 40 percent of employees report they are very satisfied with their jobs, according to the 2008 *Job Satisfaction* survey.

Next week

HOSPITALITY

From IHOP to the Worthington, head chef cooks up some treats



Paulette Wagner, owner of Prime the Pump Consulting

"Job fit' and 'turnover' are the big buzz words right now," Wagner said. "They make me frustrated when I hear them because that's what we do. We help eliminate job turnover and can fit the right people to jobs. It's a no-brainer to me."

After meeting Harriet Meyerson, another motivational speaker, Wagner was inspired to add the magic wand-carrying Morale Fairy to her presentations.

"I debuted in March 2001 at a program where I walked around and tapped everybody on the head who attended and gave them a smiley sticker and said, 'You've been given a dose of morale by the Morale Fairy,'" she said.

A sticker for an adult is just as vital as it is for a child, she said.

"Some people aren't open to something as silly as a sticker or a smile or a hug but I've learned to just go on," she said. "In the meantime, everyone else loves it and it makes my wings flutter to see people get excited and motivated by what I say and do."

Joe designed her business cards and Web site that very day. "Since then, I've been flying around as the Morale Fairy," Wagner said. "It's so much fun. I'm just having a ball. It beats teaching the sixth grade."

Wagner said the key to a company building morale, revenue and reputation is employee recognition.

"People need rewards and encouragement and pats on the back," she said. "Do something continually to reward and recognize your employees. When people feel appreciated, it makes a company successful."

"Tell them that you appreciate them. It's not hard and it's worth the effort and the time because the companies who do it well are more successful. It becomes their reputation," she said. "Just spend time listening to your employees, getting to know them. Show you value and acknowledge them. It really can be as simple as a smile." ■