



If company leaders view their employees merely as a means to an end and don't value their skills and efforts, those employees have no real incentive to feel invested beyond the paycheck.

Working for the business vs. working on the business

I heard a story once that went something like this: One day, the owner of a company flies in to the manufacturing site by helicopter, and all the employees watch through the window as the helicopter lands and the owner steps out. A few minutes later, an employee from the shop floor gets called into the office. Other employees know the person called from the floor has been friends with the owner for many years, working together years ago.

After the two friends spend some time catching up, the employee goes back to the floor and the owner gets back into his helicopter to head to a customer meeting. The employees on the shop floor ask the friend, "Wow, you know the owner so well. Didn't you guys start at the same time?" The friend tells the team, "Yeah, we have been friends for many years."

Another colleague chimes in and asks, "Well, not to be rude, but why is your friend the owner and you're still working on the floor with us?"

The employee answered, "When I started with the company, I came to work here as an employee for the business. When my friend started, his intention was to work on the business."

The point is this: It isn't important to distinguish the office and floor personnel, as all members of the team are needed to run the business. Instead, the point of the story is the difference in attitude or perspective on what someone does at work. Employees shuffle in and out of the heat-treat department every day, and for every shift around the clock. Work gets done. Parts go into the furnaces and come out. Cycles are reviewed and inspection steps are completed. Certifications are made and parts get shipped to customers on time. But to encourage those employees to feel invested in the business, to make them want to work on the business and not just for it, requires effective leadership.

WORKING FOR VS. WORKING ON

Working on the business is about asking questions. Working on the business is about creating an environment where employees want to do their job to the best of their ability. Working on the business is about navigating those challenging times together as a team to reach the company goals.

Meanwhile, working for the business is about not speaking up. Working for the business is doing what is asked without going above

or beyond that. Working for the business is avoiding conflict and doing what is most comfortable, being afraid to change the status quo. It's shuffling in and out of work just to earn a paycheck.

How do you shift from working for the business, to working on the business? It comes down to understanding how employees are motivated throughout the day. Not just what they get paid or the promotions they receive, but also how they intrinsically want to perform the job. What motivates them to show up each day beyond the paycheck? I'm going to put the responsibility onto the managers and leaders of the company.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

In my recent coursework in the I/O Psychology Ph.D. program, I studied ways the academic world views leadership, and how compa-



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nies can apply this toward developing effective and ethical leaders. Leaders are not simply supervisors or managers. The fact that you are a manager or supervisor does not necessarily mean you are a leader. Instead, the questions to ask are: How does the heat-treat supervisor or manager use their power to influence the team? Do they encourage and support their team by providing resources? Or do they belittle them and blame them when there are mistakes and throw issues under the rug?

Employees will indicate they would rather not be working and would prefer to do leisure-type activities, but studies show this attitude is due to negative environments and a lack of intrinsic motivation. This is where a leader must step up. However, there is no one way to get people to shift from working for the heat-treat department to working on the heat-treat department. Here are some thoughts to get ideas flowing:

For an archer to hit a target, they must have something to aim at. In the heat-treat world, the targets are customer requirements and Nadcap audits. Getting familiar with the specifications and requirements of the industry is critical to establish the clear goals of what the team should be aiming at.

» My college professor in thermodynamics told me that before you ever teach something, make sure you are at least three steps ahead of the students' potential questions. Be clear on what they are aiming at.

» AMS2750 is dense. It is daunting at times. Knowing what the heat-treat department is required to do is the first critical step.

As an archer, there are certain skills for using the bow and arrow to hit the target. Making instructions that are repeatable and clear for the operators is key to hitting the target consistently.

» A good leader will spend the time on the floor and in the office to see both sides of the technical and practical application of these

requirements.

» No employee wants to work on the business when the leaders are nowhere to be found on the floor.

An archer's bow and arrow are critical to hitting the target. A broken bow or nonconforming arrow will not help them as they will need to offset these issues to hit the target. Removing modification offsets in the controller (like fixing the root cause of broken heating elements in the furnace) are items that will help hit the targets.

» A good leader will try to put themselves in the shoes of their employees, trying to understand what and why they are doing something. It's easy to place blame. It's easy to point to a requirement and write someone up for not following it.

» What is needed is more time spent with the team on the floor during setup of the baskets, monitoring of the TUS or comparison method SATs, or witnessing key quench events every so often. Check in with the team.

To encourage employees to work on the business will require a change in mindset from key positions in the company. The work involved will take strong leaders willing to lead by example and not duck behind their job titles.

The outcome is that companies will strive toward employees who want to come in each day and try their best, not simply come in and let the clock tick on by. ♪

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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