

How to reduce production costs by 30%? Easily. By increasing the productivity of your production line team.

Team workers that assume responsibility for the quality of their work and who identify with the company's goals and ideals are a valuable resource. Do not overlook their potential.



A medal-winning production team

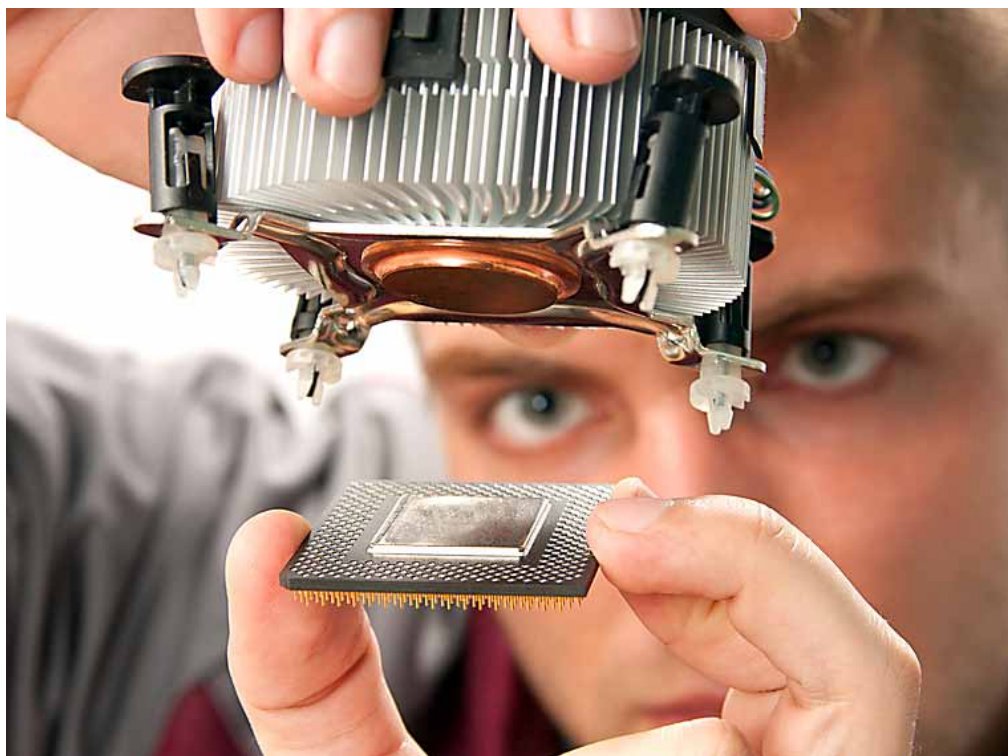
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Recent research conducted by the DOOR Group in Polish companies indicates that production costs may go down by as much as 20-30% thanks to the enhancement of group effectiveness. Hence, investing in blue collar workers'

careers and reinforcing their work identities, which apparently leads to better performance and greater productivity, may pay off and therefore be worth your while. Moreover, you can apply for co-financing of your productivity incentive programmes from EU funds such as the European Social

Fund (EFS). Polish companies do not seem to fully recognise this potential, which remains largely unused to date. In a bid to improve group effectiveness and performance they are much more likely to channel resources to incentivise white-collar staff in sales, marketing and finance. It is an entirely

different story when it comes to production line operators, production maintenance services, warehouse and servicing operatives. Even if they receive some degree of professional training in areas such as health and work safety or induction trainings on new technologies, this is all that they can usually hope for. The thinking in most companies is that production line workers should focus simply on completing their tasks and achieving the targets. Few among senior management are actually concerned with answering the question, 'what can we do to encourage employees to take on more responsibility to improve productivity, efficiency and profit?' ►



How to encourage work identities?

In order to boost production team's group effectiveness – and ultimately to improve work quality and performance, you may consider the following tips:

- reduce hierarchical distance between managers and workers and make sure the former appreciate the know-how, expertise and abilities of production line staffers,
- foster an atmosphere of shared responsibility, common goals and mission,
- develop extensive and effective top-down communication channels and appreciate bottomup communication as well as communication within teams,
- use existing and introduce new systems and managing policies (e.g. WCM – World Class Manufacturing, Lean Management),
- introduce a clear and realistic incentive scheme to reward good performance and high standards of work,
- engage all senior level officers in the process – from team leaders to senior management.

Why is it so important? Employees who share and understand company values and goals, who identify with company mission will feel responsible for its implementation and accomplishment. What prevents employees from being a part of it? Usually it is the command-and-control leadership that gets in the way. If seniors assume all responsibility and credit, lower rank employees are bound to disengage due to limited autonomy. What is more, management cultures which feature centralized decision-making and which are very prescriptive, often suffer from poor communication and coordination. Consequently, chances are that in this type of working environment employees will not respond quickly and effectively when you need them to, for instance, when facing a crisis. However, there is another way. A team leader may be a successful manager who leads their team like a coach of a sports team – one who knows how to motivate players to give great effort, who respects their needs and who makes them feel like

victory is within their grasp. Similarly, it is a team leader's job to instill commitment and confidence in each member of the team by explaining their individual impact not only on the outcome of a particular project but also on overall company performance and standing (e.g. cost-cutting efforts).

A team leader should also set priorities, attend to employee needs, support team members in their efforts to achieve goals, remove hindrances, demonstrate trust, give encouragement, reinforce confidence and enable individuals to work autonomously to help attain company objectives. Another key to successful management and effective team leadership is engaging in group efforts and setting a good example at all times. In other words,

good team leaders should always demand of themselves what they expect from their team members. In addition, direct communication within a team is a must on an everyday basis to ensure effective cooperation, information sharing and damage control. Quotes and updates from the company newsletter are definitely not enough to elucidate the strategic business objectives to production line staffers.

How to boost productivity

The best way to improve the productivity of your production teams and to get wheels turning is to implement a combination of productivity-enhancing support, tools and training. It is important that these innovations apply not only to lower rank employees but also to senior management, and particularly to team leaders and mid-level managers. Staff training courses and seminars, including workshops based on procedures, standards and business objectives specific to your company, should be conducted by qualified professionals as well as leaders of particular teams of participants. Team leaders should receive prior instruction and training to help them prepare for the coaching role.

This is how you may build an organisation culture that encourages high performance based on team effectiveness. After all, it all boils down to developing highly productive teams within your company, turning your employees into your best advocates, working seamlessly to help your business grow. With such a medal-winning team on-board you are bound to succeed.

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