

Can Your Employees Become the Cream of the Corp.?

Cream of the Corp.,

Louise S. Anderson,
Anderson Performance
Improvement Company, 2003
Reviewed by Dan Coen

What makes an employee spectacular? How can the middle, everyday performer in your organization become so special that they accelerate profits and change the way your company succeeds in its marketplace? Louise Anderson's *Cream of the Corp.* demonstrates remarkably succinct ways to build a team of high achievers. Anderson creates a simple yet impactful blueprint that shows how the old 80-20 rule (that 80 percent of your results are driven by just 20 percent of your employees) can go away.

Behavior change in order to drive employee performance is the key theme of the book. It is not enough to simply tell people to act differently, Anderson explains. And, laying the ground work through systems and processes is not adequate, either. Instead, behavior, and driving new behavior from your people, is perhaps the most critical element to structuring a phenomenal performance organization. When management understands how to build platforms that address actions, management can revitalize its middle employee base.

Cream of the Corp. outlines in an easy-to-follow guidebook an eight-step program of key principles to turn middle

performers into top leaders. The book has clearly been written for the senior and middle management audience that must get as much as possible from its fledgling employees. This management group has the opportunity, and after reading Anderson's book, the tools, to impact behavior change. Management, not employees, makes performance improvements happen in an organization, the book explains. Management sets the agenda, enforces the process through repetition, and provides feedback on actions. Early in the book, Anderson says, "The secret lies in designing personal

meaningful and thereby more motivational to the participant—especially if the participant can select which rewards they want. Cash, as a pure motivator, is a here-today-gone tomorrow prize. Rewards that can be kept and displayed become meaningful, and meaningful rewards make a difference, she says.

Another key point from Anderson is to be certain not to lose focus. Principle 7 is titled "Check Your Focus." Anderson makes it clear the two mistakes in a reward environment are leaving a program in place for a long time (more than six months) and using compensation as a re-

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consequences that motivate lasting behavior change." This is the defining concept of performance improvement. Create personal consequences that employees respond to. The question then becomes, "How?"

Anderson explains, it is central to emphasize "rewards" as the channel to drive performance and results. Each of the eight key principles, regardless of the topic, blends the use of rewards, prizes, and the tracking of results. For instance, Principle 4 is titled "Maximize the Myth: Compensation, Recognition and Rewards". This section provides a detailed analysis of blending compensation, recognition and rewards into an inspiring motivational mix to build an employee base of performers. Cash is clearly a loss leader, according to the book. It motivates in the very short-term and then actually devalues other motivational programs. Instead, Anderson says to provide the participant with "choice." Give them freedom to be in charge of the prizes they desire. What you will find, the book explains, is that non-cash prizes, such as trophies, tokens, and visual rewards become more

ward. In essence, when management loses the intent of the program, it is only natural that their employees will follow suit. Anderson prepares some very complete questions that management must ask as it identifies whether a program is working. These include, "Will managers coach and reinforce the behaviors we've defined?"; "Will managers enforce the consequences?"; "Can we verify behavior and results?" and, "Is your tracking simple and meaningful to the individuals you've asked to change?" In scalable, fast-paced organizations, focus is usually one of the first things to go away, she points out. Keeping your head squarely on the prize can become challenging. It is imperative to stay on the mark.

Cream of the Corp. is a well-written examination centered on the human aspect of people and performance. Anderson clearly outlines that people are driven by emotions and structure and by feeling they are part of a successful opportunity. Rewards, motivation, and a focused effort are key themes that compel people to perform better. Management sets the table. People respond based on management's game plan. CP



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