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## ***Management and the problem of motivation—part 2***

By Paperitalo Staff

Last week I promised to prove why attendance of employees is not the only result that employers expect. And, pardon me for perhaps being crude, but here is the absolute proof: hire cadavers. They will provide faithful attendance and never be late. Nothing will get done, but they will be there.

As I was saying, when humankind moved from an agrarian lifestyle to one in business, time was the easiest thing to measure. In fact, not too long ago, Rock-Tenn Company had an antique time clock in their lobby in Norcross, Georgia. It was quite a large and elaborate affair, and, at one time, probably a hundred years ago or so, state of the art. Measuring time was and is precise and exacting. The only problem is all it does is measure time.

Management is still hung up on time as some sort of measure of an employee's worth. Modern technology has added keyboard stroke counting, for those whose jobs are primarily at computers, biometric time clocks that one has to look into so their eye can be read as they come and go from the workplace (to avoid cheating) and so forth. There are now cell phones that can be supplied to employees that are out of the office that will call the home office if the employee goes into a bar or some other black-listed establishment (like the competitor's place of business) during working hours.

Such time and space monitoring does little to assure the employer a valid day's effort for a fair day's pay (I am even using time when I use "day" aren't I?).

Somewhere along the way, employers added "performance reviews" to time measurement although these tended to be only for management or professional employees. These have proved fairly inadequate. All sorts of variations to this method have been tried, with the most famous probably being management by objectives. The inadequacy of most of these systems, however, has to do with their lack of timeliness—if they are done every year or every six months, that is not often enough. One manager I know does them every evening for his direct reports—he calls them daily checkout sheets. This is the most effective system I have ever seen, and surprisingly,

within a week or two of implementing this in a new environment, most people (at least those that don't mind working for a living) like it. It takes effort but it get results in a big way.

I have worked in environments where performance reviews were done annually and pay raises were done at some other times not connected to the review. I have worked at places where performance reviews were done regularly and pay was frozen. And, the one I found most humorous, was the large company (it had 15,000 employees at the time) where everyone was measured against the same performance review form which was obviously designed to review paper salespersons. I asked why we used this form and was told the CEO had designed it many years before and directed everyone to use it. Unless you sold paper for a living (at the time I was a project engineer), it was useless. The upside of this one was that one's annual raise came at the same time as the worthless review.

One of the challenges facing us is that thinking skill and decisions have been driven to the lowest levels in the organization and we now need to do performance reviews for everyone, not just managers. Hourly employees, in charge of computer controls, are being given a tremendous amount of responsibility and they need reviews and feedback. However, in a thousand person facility, if this activity is just one day per person (review preparation, delivery, and summary for the files), it will take 2 ¾ effort years per year just to do reviews. This is becoming a problem.

There is a technology on the distant horizon, though, that I think can fix all these problems, if—and it is a huge if—one can successfully convince people (and probably labor departments of governments) to adopt it. For a hint of it, one need only look at the leading edge developments in video games. Researchers are just beginning to develop the ability for players to operate video games by merely thinking about the moves they want to make—no joy stick, keyboard or other clumsy input device. Wow! This means that if one's brainwaves can be interpreted for such an activity, then one's brainwaves about work could also be interpreted. This could become a very important measure of the work of researchers, for instance, one of the most difficult human performances to measure. It could even capture those "Eureka!" moments in the shower (freeing the researcher from time and space constraints).

However, this could also be effective with senior executives, another thinking group. We could learn if they really do have the ideas that move our companies forward, and then, happily pay them generously if they do.

Talk about motivation--if it is possible to know what employees are thinking...

Well, we have had a couple of weeks' break from the usual and practical. I promise we'll get back to that next week.

And, of course, think about safety all the time. We don't need any fancy brain-wave monitoring instruments to do this.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##