Clarion Review

Business & Economics

A Slice of Cake on Every Plate
Brendan Stack
BookSurge
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Bookstore shelves are stuffed with management motivation books, urging executives to emulate happy Seattle fishmongers or to ponder analogies about missing cheese wedges. In crafting a system that relies on positivity and support, Brendan Stack goes beyond that type of standard advice, which often centers on driving employees to higher sales numbers, and instead offers an extensive strategy that can transform an organization at every level.

To develop the Positive & Supportive Program, business consultant Stack drew on his extensive experience in leading start-up companies, assisting troubled enterprises, and contributing volunteer time—including stints as a firefighter, hospice worker, and Red Cross trainer.

He posits that if organizations can scrub the deeply entrenched negative communication styles from employee interactions, every subsequent exchange can be beneficial, whether it's between employees, between sales staff and customers, or among top executives. Rather than focusing on just a few key employees or departments, a company can provide "a slice of cake on every plate," meaning that each person will get the same positive benefits from a supportive environment.

Instead of squandering energy on internal cliques, gossip, and complaints, employees can get beyond the griping and find true satisfaction in their jobs, which in turn can be hugely advantageous to the company. Happy employees fuel successful companies, after all, so eliminating negativity from the workplace is crucial for achieving better productivity and sales results. Stack makes a compelling argument for putting time and effort into the program, articulating the harm that griping, in particular, can do to a company.

To drive this all-encompassing change, Stack provides a collection of ten policies, practices, and reinforcement techniques, and he's careful to keep the information

straightforward and accessible. The program, he writes, is “based on sound and time proven principles and methods, family and social values, and common sense.” Indeed, in perusing the strategies, many managers might be struck by how easy the program appears, and that is Stack’s point: by simply examining current behaviors, managers and employees are halfway toward changing them.

Examples of the suggested policies include rewarding improvement ideas, implementing internal transition training for those about to receive a promotion, instituting a “no surprise” rule surrounding job security, and adopting clear practices and standards for interactions between employees. He also recommends a strong maintenance system for regularly evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

Because it presents an uncluttered path toward achieving a positive and supportive corporate environment, Stack’s program is sweet indeed, and there’s plenty of cake to go around. Executives and managers would do well to put this program at the top of their “must-read” book stacks.