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WORKING THROUGH IT

Doing more with less

What can you do to maintain momentum with fewer people on board?

BY LAWRENCE HOUCK

In this time of tightening budgets, many groups at JPMorgan Chase need to do more with fewer employees and resources.

The challenges that managers and employees face can be considerable, but there are some steps that people can take to help themselves and their groups manage through these tough times.

A POSITIVE THING

"The first thing (to think about) is morale," said Yoon Connon, a business coach and consultant.

"The positioning must be right so that when you give the message that the business is restructuring or reorganizing, it doesn't create a sour environment," Connon said.

It helps to see the changes as a "growth opportunity for your team," she said.

When resources are limited, it gives people a chance to re-evaluate the job they are doing and to come up with new, creative ways to get things done, Connon said.

"You need to make sure that each individual is performing at their best," she said.

Managers should solicit contributions from employees about ways that a team can do a better job with the resources that are available.

"If they take on the cause of the company and the company's challenges, it helps the staff take ownership," Connon said. "When they take ownership, they start to think differently."

That new thinking is key to identifying areas where greater efficiency gains can take place.

"You start getting fresh ideas and the group is really so much more powerful than one or two people trying to solve these problems," Connon said.

It's also important to address individual concerns regularly, she said.

"Be careful not to just have contact with someone on a monthly basis or think that group contact is contact enough," she said. "That's not going to give (managers) a true heartbeat for the organization."

Individual conversations can help managers understand the concerns that people might not feel comfortable airing in a



Illustration by Michael Sloan

group setting.

"They then can give them the right tools to overcome and turn frustration into energy," she said. "A lot of times, it could be a short, five- to 10-minute conversation that can turn people around in their attitude."

SETTING GOALS

While creating the right attitude is essential, that alone won't help you meet the challenges of doing more with less.

It's also important to take a hard look at the current workflow of the group, according to productivity consultant Sara Caputo.

"First and foremost, you should make sure there is real clarity around the team's or department's goals," she said.

Clarity is important because a group may have to make choices about what can and can't be done. "Some things need to shift," Caputo said.

Like Connon, Caputo said there is opportunity in the loss.

"We can hit the reset button, revisit our goals as a team and get energized around them," Caputo said. "That's the best way to get the team on board."

Hitting the reset button means that everything you do gets a second look, said consultant Olivia Fox of Spitfire Communications.

"In having to do more with less, you will naturally have to get better at prioritization," she said. "It will force you to delete things from your to-do, should-do or could-do list, which is something you should do anyway."

Fox recommended being ruthless in de-

terminating what truly needs to be done. This is essential, she said, because focusing solely on being efficient won't get you where you need to be.

"Are you being efficient, or are you being effective?" Fox said. "You can be efficient at all the wrong things."

Kathleen Alessandro, president of Energized Solutions, agreed that deciding what needs to be done is an important early step.

"Departments, teams and companies need to come together and clarify what our priority is," she said. "We can't just assume that when other people are let go and we're left with the same amount of work that we can do it. We're deluding ourselves to think that it can all get done."

Alessandro said managers and employees should also take a close look at their work process.

For example, are employees using e-mail in an effective way in the office, or does it interrupt the workflow and cause distractions? Basic discussions about best practices in the workplace can bear fruit.

"I think we have to revisit what are not necessarily useful things that we've learned to do over the last 10 years," Alessandro said.

Alessandro added that incorporating the changes into the culture of a workplace is essential because running leaner, more efficient organizations is a business change that is here to stay.

"It's not just that there's a layoff in the company or that there's a bit of a downturn," she said. "This is a whole different 21st century model."

'Wall of Fame' highlights good service

BY ERIK BATTENBERG

Retail branch employees who go the extra mile to serve a customer might find their name in lights.

As part of Chase's efforts to emphasize the importance of good customer service in branches, it has launched a service "Wall of Fame" to recognize employees.

The physical wall is at the Polaris facility in Columbus, and a "virtual wall" that could be viewed online was scheduled to go live in late December, said Matt Dunlap, senior program manager for the Customer Experience team in retail banking.

"It's amazing what some folks have done in the field to serve customers," Dunlap said.

"We're trying to recognize those who go above and beyond," he said.

Branch employees can nominate their colleagues for consideration on the Wall of Fame, and a selection group reviews the nominations and chooses winners, Dunlap said.

When an employee is selected for the wall, his or her photo is posted along with a summary of what he or she did to earn the honor.

Andy Fadel, a personal banker at an in-store branch in Naperville, Ill., was featured on the wall in mid-December after he helped customers during a torrential downpour. Umbrella in hand, Fadel walked customers to their cars and helped them unload groceries. Chase and the grocery store received a number of calls and thank-you letters later.

An employee is added to the wall every week, Dunlap said. When an employee is selected for the wall, the Wall of Fame selection group calls the employee and sends an e-mail to everyone in the employee's branch.

"We try to build some excitement within their branch," Dunlap said.

"I've gotten a lot of great feedback from branch managers who say the wall is making a difference," Dunlap said. "It's helping to increase awareness around service."

Washington Mutual has a similar program in place, and elements of that program will be folded into the Chase program as WaMu is integrated into Chase, he said.