

Book Review for 3/16/03 by John Beegle

Title: "Managing Workplace Negativity"

Author: Gary S. Topchik

Publisher: Amacom, American Management Association

Copyright: 2001

ISBN: 0-8144-0582-7

Length: 193 pages

Price: \$21.95

Reading time: 10 hours

Reading rating: 5 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)

Overall rating: 2 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

Subject area: People Skills for Managers

I came across "Managing Workplace Negativity" when going through the bookcovers of a number of books added to the business collection in the Hunter Library of Western Carolina University. I selected several of these which I thought might interest me and headed to the library to go a little deeper in to each and make a selection. This was the first one I looked for and it had already been checked out. That was it. If it was that hot, I had to see it. Off to Amazon.Com, sure enough, it was available and I had my own copy in two days. I think it caught my interest because I had recently taken two AICPA courses in dealing with people who are difficult and similar topics.

The book is quite short and is reasonably interesting. It covers a wide range of well-selected topics in dealing with negativity, however most of the scenarios and cases used as examples in the several chapters are really too short to adequately meet my personal needs and satisfy my level of interest. I am one who always wants all of the details. The author takes a very positive attitude in dealing with the various negativisms encountered and offers thirty "quick fixes" for individual negativity problems and the problems of group negativity. Some of the solutions are downright unique. In a total of nine relatively short chapters and 3 even shorter appendices he deals with a wide range of topics in this area.

The fifth chapter is a stand-alone section that deals particularly well with managing change, particular major change. It uses a model called VISAR (Vision, Incentives, Skills, Action Plan, Resources) to identify the elements involved in obtaining the necessary support for effective implementation of change. It is tied back to the negativity topic at the end of the chapter, but the material stands well on its own as an approach to a difficult problem.

The sixth chapter is another stand-alone which emphasizes the necessity to both train your personnel in the skills necessary to perform and to provide sufficient flexibility and participation in the decision making process to allow these individuals to blossom rather than to be stifled. The author describes this as balancing Trust and Enablement.

The final three chapters promote the power of positive thinking and how it can influence the self-concept of the individuals within the entity and the corporation as a whole. The corporate image must begin from within to effectively persist as an image to the outsiders.

I found it hard to concentrate on the materials for any length of time because it seems to jump about quite a bit. I had to read the material in a number of short time-periods, going off to other activities in between and then returning to the book.. It offers a lot of good ideas and suggestions from which a tenable solution to negativity is probably available for most instances, but I think more than one reading will be necessary to use the author's approaches with confidence. As one cited reviewer stated, it would be a good desk reference.

Dr. John A. Beegle is a Professor in Accountancy at Western Carolina University. He is a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Management Accountant and a Certified Internal Auditor.