



Take time to show you care for your staff.
Your investments will pay off!

By Marlene LeFever

Employee Care

I ran into my boss in the hallway. He was practicing MBWA (Management By Walking Around), finding out how people's days were going, talking a little business, letting us know that each person is important to his team. To me he joked, "Let's rearrange the stuff on Leslie's desk so she won't be able to find anything."

What he was doing is not easy and not a waste of time. His actions were saying, "I am here for you. I like you. What you are working on is important. Keep it up. Thank you." All that during his 10-minute walk!

Many leaders, especially in publishing companies, where creating a successful product can be all-consuming, are more product-centered than people-centered. I am. I enjoy "getting the job done." I fight my tendency to feel annoyed at anyone who disturbs me. My own struggle makes me very impressed with leaders who get the job done and affirm their workers.

I met a great leader in December, at Cook's regional training event with ABEC, the Christian publishers' association in São Paulo, Brazil. We were attending a marketing seminar. He told me, "I have a master's degree in marketing. I didn't feel that I needed to be here for myself, but I want my staff to establish a pattern of lifelong learning and I am here modeling what I want them to do."

Honoring employees can take many forms. A publishing house in Rio de Janeiro offers high school courses, actually bringing teachers into the plant on company time. The warehouse manager told me, "Most of the people in this program come from my staff. To be honest, I sometimes resent the work time I'm losing. But I realize how important this program is to the future of each participant. Think of the loyalty we're building. Most will stay here the rest of their lives because we've enlarged their potential."

A good people manager demands increasing excellence and confronts employees who are not meeting standards. (For more on confrontation, see page 11.) Employees respect a good manager. They will work harder, both to please him or her, and to bring excellence to what they are doing for God.

A good people manager does not practice manipulation. One research project showed that when compliments were



Some 20 publishing houses participated in the ABEC-Cook training. They responded to the challenges issued by LeFever and other presenters.

given in a predictable, uniform way, they were actually demotivating. Employees who get a birthday card signed with just the boss' name, without a personal note, may suspect their boss's heart is not in the gesture. The card was a "have to," rather than "want to" thing.

Those little notes, even just a sentence or two, can have long-lasting results. I was preparing to be interviewed on a Christian radio station in England. On the reporter's bulletin board was a yellowing handwritten note. The date indicated the note was over a decade old. Imagine! A boss had taken three minutes to affirm a young employee and his effort had meant enough to her to keep the snippet on display for over 10 years.

Take time for employees. Offer training to make them better equipped for their jobs and to demonstrate their value to the organization. Write personal, specific notes when you catch them doing something excellent or beyond what is necessary. Eat lunch with them. Pray for their specific concerns. Demand the best from people who know you respect and like them, and they'll deliver. ♦