

# The Worth Ethic *Heart at Work*

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**L**ove is the most powerful force in the world, and that includes the world of work. Nevertheless, nobody talks much about love at work. It's as taboo as talking about sex was 20 years ago. We act as if somehow we would doom our business to failure if we once admitted that we love our work team for its skilled performances, love our products for their genuine usefulness or love our managers for the productivity they inspire.

We expect work to reward us with a meaningful life that engages our emotions as well as our minds and bodies. Naturally, we want to care and be cared about at work. We want to believe we are worth as much to the company as our bosses are. We want to perform meaningful work, and we expect a similar commitment from our coworkers and bosses.

This is especially true because we spend the majority of our lives at work. Our work week, which shrunk to just over 40 hours per week in 1973, is back up to about 46 hours per week today. We have ten fewer hours of leisure time each week than we had 15 years ago. Work consumes two thirds of our day and dominates our lifestyle.

All these factors contribute to our growing need for the Worth Ethic. The Worth Ethic is a belief in your indelible self-worth and the fundamental and potential worth of others, and it is especially for those of us who will work in the last decades of the 20th century and beyond. People who live by the Worth Ethic don't follow directions without thought or interest. They take responsibility at work and put forth their best efforts. Worth Ethic managers commit themselves to help employees develop, to use their skills and talents and to reap the just rewards of their efforts. The result is a multitude of personal contributions that create worthy products and services.

Fortunately, the Worth Ethic benefits employers as much as it benefits employees. When people find their worth affirmed at work, productivity skyrockets. Why is that? One reason, according to the senior vice-president of Federal Express, James A. Perkins, is that employees treat customers the way they themselves

are treated by management. "When you take care of people," Perkins says, "they will deliver service in a courteous and efficient manner. When that happens, profits will be forthcoming." In just 15 years, Federal Express has grown to a \$4 billion company and is listed as one of the top companies in "The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America."

Then there is the Worth Ethic example of Florida Power & Light, which organized 10,000 employees into teams to focus on employee involvement and innovation. One Florida Power & Light team saved the company \$26.6 million in one year. At Frito-Lay's plant near Bakersfield, California, teams working in open systems with lots of communication and little supervision brought the plant up to full production in one week (typically, "ramp-up" takes 6 to 13 weeks). At Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company's Layton, California plant, people involvement is the secret to "producing 50,000 tires a day where at a comparable sized plant they do 25,000," says Goodyear executive vice-president Stanley J. Mihclick.

Bosses can share power, rewards and praise to create the "WE" of Worth Ethic, but today, most don't. Companies approve of open communications and honest disagreements between employee and boss, but that's as close as they come to encouraging a free exchange of feelings in the office, shop, company halls or parking lot.

A few forward-looking managers use this new approach to leading people. They recognize that everyone in the company wants to be capable and powerful. They empower their employees to make significant personal contributions at work by training every person to maximum potential, offering challenges at each level of responsibility and managing employees with flexible organization and caring systems. Greg Steltenpohl and Gerry Percy, cofounders of the Odwalla Juice Company in Davenport, California, expanded their company from 4 to 75 people, from squeezing fresh juice by hand for a few local restaurants to selling millions of bottles a year, using the firm's philosophy, "Juice for Humans." Steltenpohl

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says that means "trying to run Odwalla as a human-oriented business, both for the customers and our employees."

At Morrison & Foerster, a nationwide law firm, young associate lawyers use report cards to rate the senior partners on their strengths and weaknesses. According to James Finberg, coordinator of the program to evaluate the thirty lawyers at the firm's San Francisco office litigation department, the program "gives us the sense that the partners respect us and consider our comments about how the firm should be run to be important." That's important, says Peter Keane, president of the Bar Association in San Francisco, because, "if a firm doesn't want to be raided, it's going to have to be more responsive to associates' ideas and desires."

How do you, as one person, move your boss toward caring about you? After all, the idea of caring about employees hits at the quick of what managers have been taught not to do—get involved with employees and empathize with their feelings. Most don't listen to their employees' complaints and dreams unless they are forced to. And if your boss is more adversary than collaborator, inclined toward workaholicism rather than a balanced lifestyle, you can't expect such a person to superimpose new caring behaviors on top of his or her old attitudes.

People change behavior in a lasting way only if they are willing to change their attitudes first. That's where you come in. Eleanor Roosevelt wisely observed: "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." To change the way you are treated by your boss and co-workers, change your own attitudes first. Begin with a shift in your attitude towards telling the truth, sharing visibility, speaking up when you have a good idea and getting clear on your life priorities.

Can you, as one individual, put the Worth Ethic to work? Yes! The Worth Ethic shows up in your personal integrity and how you use your personal power. It shows up in your willingness to find deep meaning in your work, to use your intuition, to develop your talents and to approve of yourself. It shows up in your success at balancing life so that you reward yourself for work well done and at managing stress and time so that they work for you.

The Worth Ethic is conceived in self-esteem and nurtured by your own accomplishments and self-satisfaction. Once you have it inside, you will be surprised at the frequency with which your boss will compliment your work and give you more opportunities to shine. The reasons for this are twofold: (1) with greater feel-

ings of self-worth come increased abilities to hear and accept the good things people say to you, and (2) as you accomplish more and show your self-satisfaction, people will begin to ask you about the change they see. "What's happened to you?" they'll ask. Then you can tell them, "The Worth Ethic!"

## SIX WAYS YOU CAN PERSONALLY DEVELOP A WORTH ETHIC:

### 1. MOVE TO METICULOUS STANDARDS OF INTEGRITY AND TRUST

Somewhere a lot of people got the idea that if they told the truth, they wouldn't get what they wanted. Once I confronted a boss with my version of the truth about how we should develop our products. He didn't agree and neither did my coworkers. But I kept hammering away until eventually he heard me out and tried one of my ideas. It worked, and the next time I offered an idea, I was listened to at the beginning.

Too often, we operate out of expediency when we should be more concerned about building trust. Over the long run, expedient actions create distrust and suspicion. Joint problem solving efforts are nearly impossible without mutual trust. That's why, when managers decide whether to promote a person from individual contributor to first-level manager, they place heavy emphasis on the person's ability to build trust and get people to work well together. Earn the respect of others by holding yourself accountable for what you say and do.

### 2. FIND MEANING AND PURPOSE ON THE JOB

Meaning comes from making a solid connection between your core values and your job tasks. To find where your own deepest values connect to your job, think of the times when you most loved your work. Think about whether your company's products and services relate to your values. For example, do they make the world healthier, happier or safer? Consider how your personal values and your job connect to the company's short and long term goals.

In my first corporate management position, I was asked to present a program explaining how performance evaluations were done at our company, how jobs were coded and graded and how the salary system was administered. At first, I thought the assignment would be rather boring, but after I thought about it, I realized the program told employees how their salaries related to levels of responsibility and education, how managers

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evaluated their performance and how their salary increases were financed and justified. Properly presented, the program would give employees a new understanding of what they needed to do to earn more money on the job. Suddenly I had considerable enthusiasm for my new assignment, and eventually the program became very popular.

### 3. EMPOWER OTHERS BY SHARING YOUR OWN POWER

Create a productive partnership on any project you lead by encouraging others to make identifiable contributions. Then make sure you share the credit for your group's accomplishments. When you focus on people, you increase their opportunities to participate, build their commitment and encourage their creativity.

Most of us see at least one of our peers as a competitor for the next promotion we want. But sharing power sets us up for success faster than hoarding visibility can ever do. Research shows that organizational competence comes from participation, commitment and creativity. After the Ford Motor Company's design staff was trained in positive behavioral techniques and learned to involve employees in daily problem solving and decision making, its score in these areas improved about 70%. If you are viewed as extremely competitive, the top management is more likely to bring in an outside manager than promote you when an opening occurs. Why? Because the next strongest person is likely to quit rather than be managed by you. People who can't build strong relationships don't get promoted.

### 4. RECOGNIZE THE "WINNER" IN EVERYONE—INCLUDING YOURSELF

Praise people in as many ways as you can. Smile, look and speak directly at the person and use the person's name. Then say exactly what the person did to earn your respect. Does your next quarter's bonus depend on how faithfully the phones are answered and how quickly and clearly the messages get relayed to you? Words such as "You're terrific because you found out what the customer wanted, figured out where I was, got in touch with me and, in the long run, contributed to reaching our sales target this quarter," make an assistant feel great—and give him or her specific ways to repeat the performance and earn more praise.

Listen. Giving people—your boss, your co-workers, your assistants—the gift of your full attention is a very strong way to show you value their ideas. Heed the words of J.W. Marriott, Jr., chairman and president of Marriott Corporation, "If we treat our employees correctly, they'll treat the customers right. And if cus-

tomers are treated right, they'll come back."

Most importantly, praise yourself. Sure, you fail sometimes. R.H. Macy failed seven times before his New York store took off. Babe Ruth struck out 1330 times in pursuit of his 714 home runs. Praise yourself and others for good attempts. It's true that we tend to treat others very much as we treat ourselves. If you don't pat yourself on the back, you'll find it almost impossible to praise others.

### 5. GET COMFORTABLE WITH YOUR CREATIVITY

Daniel Yankelovich, editor of *Psychology Today*, says, "Younger and better-educated jobholders...have made the momentous discovery that work, rather than leisure, can give them what they are looking for - an outlet for self-expression as well as material rewards."

Support yourself with positive "self-talks" about the worth of your ideas even when others do not. No doubt you've heard the response of the Yale University professor who first read Fred Smith's management paper on providing overnight delivery services (Smith later founded Federal Express), "The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a C, the idea must be feasible." And Spencer Silver, whose work led to the adhesive used for 3-M's Post-Its, admitted that "if I had thought about it, I wouldn't have done the experiment. The literature is full of examples that say you can't do this."

To develop confidence in your creativity and intuition, make a list of the times they have worked well for you already. The more you see how they have helped in the past, the more it will occur to you to trust them in the future. Encourage others to share their creative ideas too. Don't get so attached to your own ideas that you can't see the value of integrating the ideas of others. Admit your own mistakes and tolerate others'.

### 6. CLARIFY YOUR PRIORITIES TO BALANCE YOUR WORK AND HOME LIFE

Many of us are convinced that, to get promoted, we have to work long hours. Some of us go so far as to stay late and return on weekends to put in "face time." Gary Cooper, professor of organizational psychology at the University of Manchester, England, studied the work habits of over 1,000 executives in the United States and Britain and concluded, "Any manager who works over 50 hours a week is turning in less than his best performance."

Good health is critical to sustain peak performance in any endeavor—including work. This means we all need to eat healthily, avoid alcohol and drugs, get plenty of

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sleep and exercise. Lack of sleep, for example, diminishes your ability to think creatively and to cope with unfamiliar situations. British psychophysiologicalist, Dr. James Horne, has found that losing even one night's sleep disrupts a person's ability to think divergently.

Work without resentment, putting your energies into the task at hand, but don't use work as an excuse to justify the lack of an outside life. In a study of 37,000 people, researchers in the United States, Finland and Sweden found the health risk of living alone is as great as the risk of smoking. People without close friends and a strong social network are twice as likely to die prematurely as those with supports.

If you believe you can't have both a work life and a home life, you are setting yourself up for a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is a particularly relevant point since almost half of all workers today are women—who are usually required to juggle both a career and family—and American Demographics magazine predicts that women will fill 64% of the new jobs created between now and the year 2000. The question is not whether we can't have work lives and home lives, but how we will manage them.

## Here are Some Proven Time Management Tips:

Watch for your personal patterns of productivity: do you do better work early in the morning or later in the day? Can you take care of paperwork before or after official hours? Do you work more efficiently at your desk in the office or at home? Firms such as Pacific Bell, Travelers Companies and J.C. Penney have found worker productivity increases up to 25% when people work at home.

Use calendars, schedules and lists, of course, but if you are a "left-brain" person, also schedule "joy breaks" during the day, and plan your play as carefully as you plan your work.

Set specific worthwhile and challenging goals. Goal setting is the single most reliable way to become more productive when you work.

Begin installing the Worth Ethic by treating yourself with more care and then treating others as you treat yourself. You will greatly increase your own and others' job satisfaction as you inspire high integrity and meaning in work, share power, praise and recognize, support people's creativity, development and growth, promote productivity and wellness, and serve as a role model for a balanced work and home life.

You will also lead your group to new heights of productivity. Groups managed by Worth Ethic values consistently outperform groups led by managers who are competent but without compassion. For example, at

Transco Energy in Houston, President George Slocum holds "bragging sessions" to let his employees boast about their cost-cutting schemes. Based on past experience, he expects to save \$18 million over the next two years simply because departments want to be recognized at these meetings.

These heights of job satisfaction and productivity will not go unnoticed. People around you will want to follow your lead and make their own internal changes. Change is almost never a simple matter of attending a training session or watching a demonstration, and then putting it into effect when you get back to the office. But as you support people with your long range strategies, external changes will show up in the systems, procedures and structures that help your organization operate. In the end the Worth Ethic will create broad success for you and your company. You can be sure of this, because the Worth Ethic works.

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