PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Create a priority list of duties

Staff must not only know their duties, but in which order they should be tackled

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To ensure your employees know their tasks and prioritize them properly, you must rely on standard operating procedures (SOPs) to guide them. Once you communicate what an employee's expected duties are, you've completed step one of creating an accountable employee.

I walked through the exact steps to completing this in my column last month, "Create accountable employees" (March 2016).

Now that you have created an established list of position tasks for each employee, the tasks can be identified from most to least important, with those that impact customers directly having the highest priority.

The next step is to make sure that all tasks are in the job description, there isn't waste within the steps and there is accountability built in. Why? Each employee must be held accountable for getting the job done right the first time. If not, you have a lot of words and no requirements, which are most important. The task is identified, the need is qualified, the responsibility is quantified and the performance is measureable.

You also will need to teach people how to use the devices that they will encounter in performing their tasks. Let's assume that we've hired the correct person and all of the required skill sets are in place for the devices, systems and programs they will be working with.

This is a very important point to consider when hiring employees. Is the person being considered for hire able to perform the tasks that they will be assigned? If not, the business may be bringing a potential "problem" into the process. This is not the fault of the employee, but of management for not hiring properly. The potential employee should have a demonstrated ability to perform the tasks that are identified for their job description. Management can make accommodations in some cases or they may need to take a pass and move on to the next candidate.

The SOPs are nothing more than a roadmap that, if followed, produce a desired result. So it is imperative that each step in the desired roadmap be clear, in order, eliminate waste and produce a predictable and measureable result. That means very simply that they know what's expected, how it should happen and what the result should be.

When building an SOP, the following sequence should be identified:

1. Identify the tasks to be completed. Who will perform the task, what will be performed and when?

2. Segment tasks into groupings that will be assigned to specific employee designations or job descriptions.

3. Create job descriptions that include tasks, goals, measurements and performance criteria, making sure that the employee won't be "over tasked." Determine how many tasks will be performed by each employee and what their specific role and responsibilities are.

4. Have all devices, equipment, forms and electronic equipment operational and in place for employee use. Ensure all relevant equipment is on site and operable and that all estimating, accounting and part-tracking programs up to date.

5. Create visual indicators such as status boards that will identify process within the tasks.

6. Provide any training necessary for use of the process components to the staff. Employees need clear expectations of what their work product should include and the measurements that will be used to confirm SOP or process compliance.

7. Clearly communicate requirements so there are no misconceptions about the expectations. Also provide written versions of the requirements.

8. Create a checkpoint document for quarterly review to provide feedback about employee performance and any updates or changes to their job tasks.

SOPs ensure that specific business practices are followed to keep customer service at the highest levels and the production processes efficient. All requirements for the job and all tasks associated with them must be detailed if the employee is to be held accountable for their performance. Always be sure that reviews are completed and that opportunities are provided to allow for continuous improvement. Measurement is key to the success of the store and ensuring that SOPs are met. ∎