



Is It Time For A Morale Booster?

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After a rousing ride on the new economy wave, many tech companies are now facing hacked budgets, equivocating clients and possum-playing prospects. So it's no head-scratcher that your IT team's esprit de corps may be ailing and in need of a morale pick-me-up.

The trickle-down effect of tough times at a company is especially hard-felt by technical staff. Steve Rockey, vice president of services at Data Systems Worldwide, an outsourcing firm based in Woodland Hills, Calif., likened the travails of technology workers to those of flight attendants: Peers have been laid off, competitors are going out of business and customers are more demanding and uptight. On top of that, IT professionals are "still expected to deliver high-quality services" in the face of all the upheaval, Rockey added.

In the current environment, you'll need to be especially vigilant about noticing signs that the confidence of the troops may be headed south. "Complaining, grouching, negativity, cynicism, closed doors, arriving late, leaving early and generally not seeming to care are symptoms of slipping morale," said Bob Nelson, Ph.D. (www.nelson-motivation.com), author of "1001 Ways to Reward Employees" (Workman Publishing).

While it's easy to get caught up in the doom and gloom heaped on nightly by network Chicken Littles, remind your staff that times will once again take on a cheery glow. "Make sure your team realizes that dealing effectively with the realities of today will help them survive to reap benefits when things turn," Rockey said.

Paul Glen (www.c2-consulting.com), author of "Leading Geeks: How to Manage and Lead People Who Deliver Technology" (Jossey-Bass), offers tips on motivating technology workers in tough times:

Manage meaning

Motivate techies by giving them a sense of the larger significance of the work. If they don't have a sense of meaning, their motivation suffers and day-to-day decisions become difficult.

Show a career path

Many IT employees have only a vague sense that there's more to advancing their careers than acquiring new technical knowledge. Be specific about what competencies a techie must demonstrate in order to advance his or her career.

"Projectize"

Projects turn work into a game. Techies love games with objectives that delineate goals and



success criteria.

Encourage "isolation"

While IT pros need free-flowing communication within their own workgroups, collective seclusion provides fertile soil for motivation, thereby cultivating cohesion and concentration.

Power of free food

For IT employees, even those making sizable incomes, free food is a major motivator, far more than an equivalent amount of cash.

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