Why Input from Your Team Matters

Is your company run as a dictatorship or a democracy? Is it a "my way or the highway" culture that you have or are the inmates running the asylum? The best course, as most of us recognize, is neither extreme.

Step back and take a look at how things like systems, procedures and new ideas are introduced into your organization. I believe there should be a balance that allows positive input from the people who will be directly involved in whatever is being introduced and the owner/management proposing the idea. But, of course, the final decision rests on the shoulders of the owner. That's an owner's responsibility.

Here is an example of what I am talking about: My company recently switched our crew tracking software. We wanted something that would be more mobile and help eliminate all the data entry our office manager was doing every workday. I could have easily just picked something I thought would work and tell my office manger and the rest of the staff that we would be switching to ABC software for time tracking and that was that, learn it, love it, live it!

Instead, I got my staff involved.

What we need to determine

I tend to use this same type of model whenever there is a big decision being made for the company, whether it's software, buying enclosed trailers, equipment purchases andso on.

1. How is it going to make our lives easier and what we do more efficient?

2. How much time is it going to save?

3. Get at least three options and research the pros and cons of each.

4. How much is it going to cost, and is it within our budget?

5. How easy do you feel it will be to implement and use?

I've found that it is much better to let the people who are going to be directly involved on a daily basis with the new changes work on steps 1, 2 and 3. So, returning to my software example, we all did some research and narrowed our options down to three companies. My office manager set up a time for each company to give us a webinar presentation on their software. We kept in mind the above five things when making our evalution. We got pricing on each company's product and then made a realistic budget that was appropriate for our company based on the above criteria.

I believe that it's important that whoever is in the decision-making process understands the costs involved. If not, then be prepared for everyone going with the most expensive product of the bunch.

Our decision came down to two factors: ease of use and cost. Since I'm not the person that will be using the software, I relied very heavily on the input of my staff for determining the ease of use of the product. On another note, I set the parameters on what I expected as far as ease of use was concerned. I used the iPhone as an example of what to look for in this area, if it was not easy to figure out and use then it was not for us.

Finally, there were two companies that we really liked, but one was substantially more expensive and more complex as well. Finally we got a few references from other companies using the software we were considering and talked to them about their experiences with the product. Using all of the information we gathered we made our decision and opted for the easy-to-use more cost-effective software. So far the results have been great.

Using your team to help make and implement these types of decisions is beneficial on several levels. First of all they're empowered to help make decisions that will affect the whole organization for the better. Second, since they're the ones helping make the decision, the "buy in" is already there and hopefully they will be excited when it comes time to implement the new idea.