

## Employee Motivation and Goal Setting

The New Year is finally here, and while it's hard to believe that 2012 has already come and gone, 2013 presents an opportunity for renewed enthusiasm and motivation amongst employees.

For many organizations, the past several years have been a struggle, and keeping employee morale high has no doubt been difficult in challenging economic times.

Nonetheless, it is important for team leaders to take the time necessary to invest in their employees and motivate them to achieve, and doing so will create an atmosphere where employees are more apt to produce and organizations will thrive.

### Employee Motivation

According to William Knese, CMA, CFM, CPA, chair-elect of [IMA](#) (Institute of Management Accountants), motivating employees is a multi-step process, and should begin by understanding each employee and what they do for the company.

"If you're going to motivate someone, you first have to understand what they do and why it's important," said Knese, who serves as CFO and vice president of finance and administration of [Angus Industries, Inc.](#), which designs and manufactures high-quality, custom-engineered operator cabs for heavy mobile equipment. "For finance professionals, what we do is foundationally important because if we do our jobs well, we can help our organization make good decisions. If they make good decisions, organizations will be more profitable and create more wealth. This wealth in turn creates jobs and helps the community build families, churches and schools."

The first step is to outline why the individual's role is important. The next step, Knese says, is to discuss where they fit into the landscape and goals of the organization.

"People want to be told that the things that they do matter and that someone noticed their contribution," he said.

### Importance of Goal Setting

Annual goal setting is also a good way to improve motivation and job performance, as it keeps employees engaged and involved in the organization's improvement. Knese notes that the best goals will cascade throughout the organization, where senior management is dedicated to what the organization hopes to achieve and the rest of the organization aligns accordingly.

Goals should also be refreshed throughout the year to ensure that they are still achievable and that they continue moving the organization in the right direction.

"If it appears that a goal is no longer achievable, a reset may have to happen and a new goal established," said Knese. "However, if the long-term goal is still achievable, the organization should continue to work towards it."

He notes that if a reset were to occur, it is important to have a conversation with affected individuals.

"Keep people engaged," said Knese. "Sit them down and say, 'we know this happened and here is how your goal has changed in order to make this happen.' You can't get people excited about working if they don't think that you care about them."

### Year-Round Improvements

To help ensure employees stay motivated year-round, organizations should invest in continuing education programs. This will prove to employees that they are important to the success of the organization and that their personal and professional growth matters.

It also improves the contributions these employees make to the organization.

“It is important that you invest in your people and press them to learn more,” said Knese. “You may have someone who has 20 years of experience in the field, and maybe this is true, but there is also the chance that they have one year of experience repeated 20 times.”

He continued: “By giving employees the opportunity to learn more and continue their education, you are not only investing in the future of the organization, you are showing them that they are doing a good job and you are interested in investing in their future.”

For Knese, employee motivation comes down to caring about employees and understanding their personal and professional needs.

“As a supervisor, you should care about each person and their contribution to the company,” he said.

“Understand who they are and what their family life is like. If they have a personal problem, give them the time to address it. If you care about the person and you care about them doing the best they can do, they might be more inclined to go above and beyond on the assignments you give them.”