Quick Quiz: Assess Your Company's Productivity Quotient

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According to U.S. government statistics, overall business productivity is down. Anecdotally, we hear many companies blaming the marketplace for lower-than-expected revenues. It's easy to attribute disappointing profits to the market slowdown, but is that the full story at your company?

Calling All Managers
Morale is a key indicator of productivity and vice-versa. Productive, engaged employees are likely to be enthusiastic and creative about their work. Likewise, satisfied employees are likely to make a positive impact on the bottom line. When expectations and financial results do not sync up, it's time to measure management effectiveness. Are your employees satisfied with their individual contribution to your company goals? If not, the problem could be more than customers' current, but temporary, hesitancy to purchase. While you are waiting for the market to rebalance and bounce back, take this opportunity to look inward by assessing your company's Productivity Quotient (PQ).

Assess!
Start by taking this brief quiz. After answering the questions for yourself, choose the best process for inviting your employees to participate. For the PQ to be an effective tool, it is important that you accurately understand the organization's collective perspective. Employees are more likely to be honest and constructive when they do not feel vulnerable, so we recommend giving them an opportunity to share their input anonymously. Make sure they feel comfortable in the knowledge that their responses are – and will remain – anonymous, and that nothing they say, whether positive or negative, will ever come back to haunt them. One tool that we have found to be particularly useful in helping to achieve this kind of anonymous feedback is Zoomerang – a fast, free, online service for conducting anonymous surveys.

While this tool is not a comprehensive assessment instrument, it will help you start to identify the big issues into which you will need to drill down farther. Once you understand some drivers of your company's productivity level, you and your management team can begin to improve your management systems, communicate better, and position your firm for success as the market shifts up.

Scoring:
- Agree (2 points)
- Neutral (0 points)
- Disagree (-2 points)

1. I understand my company's business strategy.
2. I know exactly what my job responsibilities are.
3. I know how my job contributes to my company achieving its goals.
4. The amount of work I'm expected to do is reasonable – it's not too little, and not too much.
5. I have the decision-making authority I need to do my job effectively.
6. I recommend my company to others as a good place to work.

Analyze!
Calculate the average score. How did you and your colleagues do?

- 8+: Excellent! The communication in your company is strong, and your employees have the support they need to make your company a success. If your company is having productivity issues, you can look to other potential causes.
- 4-7:Caution! Areas need improvement. Reviewing answers to the quiz will point you in some new directions with your employees.
- Below 3: Beware! The Productivity Quotient may have pinpointed the source of your company's problems. Consider the answers to each question as you review our analysis, and closely review the communication process between management and employees for areas to improve.

How well did you know the concerns of your company? If your score is perfect, consider what's working well, strengthen it, and spread that management know-how around your company. If not, chances are it points to some systemic challenges. Read on...

Act!
The beauty of an effective assessment tool is that the questions can point directly to the answers. We'll steer you in the right direction and the rest is up to you.
Here are some action steps for low scores on each question:

1. **Understanding the Strategy**: If employees do not understand your company's business strategy, you have two choices: either communicate your strategy better or rethink it. Your employees may see holes in your thinking that you do not. Dig deeper to find out what aspect is unclear for them and listen for common threads in their responses that could point to solutions.
2. **Knowing Responsibilities:** If employees do not know their responsibilities, do the mangers? Time for a "Roles & Goals" conversation. At the end of the dialogue, be sure the manager and employee both walk away with a written summary of the understanding. This will make performance management much easier.
3. **Linking Individual Goals to Corporate Objectives:** If people do not understand how their jobs relate to the company's objectives, you may have a communication problem (have a department meeting and/or "Roles & Goals" conversations) or an ineffective performance management system. Do you have a system in place? Do the managers understand the system and use it effectively? Are they motivated to use it? Or is the system dysfunctional for current needs? Re-evaluate your system with your managers to find means of improving it.
4. **Reasonable Expectations:** Are employees expected to do too much or too little? Periodically look at the responsibilities of each person on your team and rebalance the workload as necessary. Also consider whether employees could be exposed to a broader array of responsibilities, enhancing their skill set, expanding their knowledge base, and keeping their interest. Do you see every employee as a contributor to the company beyond the specifications of his or her job?
5. **Decision-Making Authority:** Take advantage of the talent you have. If your employees are not empowered to implement solutions, they won't bother trying to find them. If you're not taking advantage of your talent, now is the time to start taking steps to figure out the best way to do so.
6. **Recommending the Company:** If your employees would not recommend the company to others, it is important that you find out why not. If they would but do not, do you have an Employee Referral Program in place to motivate such recommendations? Such programs are quick, low-cost alternatives to other methods for sourcing candidates.

Conclusion
This recalibration of the market offers a golden opportunity to rethink your corporate level of productivity and its drivers. Further, it is the perfect time to address issues you may not have had time to address when everything seemed to be moving at warp speed. Take advantage of this time by assessing employee satisfaction, analyzing the effectiveness of your company's employee communication, and addressing major and minor problems. As a result, your company will be well prepared for your next round of growth and well positioned to take advantage of the coming market upswing.

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