

Article

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Knowing Our People

Several years ago I was reminded that work experience is not a comprehensive indicator of the full potential of people.

This occurred in connection with a Vision Launch Team, at a mill in Northern Ontario. The company had developed a new strategic direction with a new Vision, Pillars of Success, Strategic Objectives and Ongoing Measures. This team was charged with developing a plan of events to help all employees comprehend the new approach and to coordinate its implementation.

To commence the planning session each of the people were asked to describe aspects of their lives that others may not have been fully aware of. It was surprising to many on the team to learn things about each other they did not know beforehand, even though they were neighbors in a small town and in some cases long standing work colleagues.

Academic and musical accomplishments were noted, as well as a range of voluntary service. One person stood out as an excellent example. He was a long service employee, a union member, but not a supervisor in the plant. He had however been for many years a member of the executive of the provincial amateur hockey association. In the course of those duties he had been participating in budgetary and personnel decisions that dwarfed those at the mill. He was a quiet man and had been under the radar for years.

With the team's knowledge of their cumulative range of skills and expertise, they put together an outstanding program and involved members in roles they would never have anticipated at the outset.

I wonder how often employees simply park their brains at the gate because they have consistently underutilized. The next time you put together an improvement team, simply ask the question at the outset. Tell us something about your interests or skills that we are likely unaware of? You will be amazed at the responses.

