

Inspire Your Employees

Encourage Co-Workers to Get Payroll Certified

BY RAEANN HOFKIN, CPP

I once heard that good leaders manage people, but great leaders inspire people.

Managers with reputations for investing in the skills and growth of their people will attract the best and most loyal employees. They attract the type of employees who want to learn, then inspire them to push beyond their comfort zone. Managers who create an environment with a focus on developing professional skills will attract, inspire, and retain valued employees who crave continuing education.

To inspire your employees, try aligning your interests with theirs. What do your employees want and need to succeed in

their positions? How can you help them? Are you doing your best to give your employees opportunities to achieve their professional goals?

Inspire employees by asking questions that help them see their opportunities and obstacles, and how to deal with them. It shows that you are interested in their success, and it answers their question, "What's in it for me?"

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Work with all your employees to set department goals, but also meet with each one individually to discuss personal goals. Employees want to be part of a winning team and they need to know their contributions are making a difference. Both individual and team feedback should be sincere, quick, and frequent.

The Importance of Education

One great goal is professional certification, such as APA's Fundamental Payroll Certification (FPC) and Certified Payroll Professional (CPP) designations. If the employee does not suggest certification, you should.

Ask your employees to propose a plan to meet this goal. Do they need training or other resources? What obstacles do they need to overcome? By asking these questions, you will give employees a greater sense of control over their futures and the opportunity to develop new skills.

Help your employees see that the CPP/FPC certification is recognized as a great personal achievement. Point out that earning the CPP/FPC designation validates their standing as a subject-matter expert in payroll. Payroll requires a high level of understanding. APA's certification program can increase payroll knowledge tremendously and give employees the confidence they need to develop their professional careers.

Why Certification?

Becoming certified in your profession shows others you have advanced knowledge in your area of expertise, and you are committed to your career. Certification is an investment in your future because it creates instant professional credibility.

It also increases your potential. The bar has been raised in the payroll profession and top employers are now taking additional steps to ensure they are hiring the most skilled and knowledgeable individuals. They are seeking payroll professionals with CPP and FPC credentials.

It's important to note that you can't force your employees to get certified; they have to *want* it. If they feel forced, they will resent being pushed. You need to make your employees understand they are important and valued in your organization so they feel the investment to become certified is warranted.

Try removing the obstacles to certification. What is holding them back? Could it be the cost of the exam or study material? Offer to pay for the exam and study materials, whether they pass or fail. Could it be the lack of time to study? Offer to extend their lunch once or twice a week. Are they afraid to fail or do they have test anxiety? Offer to help them study during an extended lunch period. Provide information

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on local chapter study groups or offer to hold a study group at your place of employment. If you are not certified, ask them to consider studying with you and lead by example.

Above all, once you have that initial meeting and you let your employees know they have your support and commitment, don't let them down. Keep up your part by providing the tools for training, support, and time to study. If you maintain the momentum, it will be a win-win situation for everyone. ■

Get Your Boss' Attention

You know how important payroll certification is, but your boss might not understand its full value. Show your supervisor the article published in the September 17, 2007 issue of *Forbes* magazine. This article details how payroll-certified professionals keep organizations safe from noncompliance penalties and fines.

Certification is an investment in your future and your company's financial health. Go to www.americanpayroll.org and click on the "Certification" link to download a copy of the *Forbes* article today.

Read the article "Get Ahead in Payroll" from the December 2007 issue of *PAYTECH* to learn more about how APA can help you become certified today!