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goals that an individual or team develops that simply must be accomplished or everything else does not really matter. They are the goals that will help your firm climb to the next level of success, so identifying the WIG's that will create an environment that is better, faster, cheaper and easier is the key to true positive change.

The key to identifying these WIG's is for the leaders in the firm to get out of the way and allow your team to identify and develop these initiatives. For years, firm leaders have shared their frustration in this endeavor. The frustration often is communicated in a short sentence, "I ask everyone to share their ideas but I get NO response, so I have to do this myself". That statement tells me that their heart is in the right place, but their process is broken.

In this article, we will concentrate on the "how" of getting your team to share their ideas to make the initiatives in the firm better, faster, cheaper and easier. The goal – make your team fearless about suggesting new and innovative ideas without fear that they will be laughed at or ignored.

### **Set the Proper Tone**

Set the proper tone means creating an environment that embraces open discussion about new ways of implementing both current and futuristic initiatives. This tone starts at the top level of the organization. When you think about your firm leaders, are they excited to communicate with all levels of the team and engage in open and honest feedback about what is working and what is not working? Are all levels of the firm asked for their opinion when determining strategies for the strategic plan or are only the owners and sometimes managers being given time on the agenda?

Think deeply about what your leadership tone is saying about your openness to new ideas, as this is the most common deterrent to really tremendous ideas from your

team. Your new mantra should be “*new and different ideas are welcome and*

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As you read the word communication, your eyes may have already rolled and your mind is already buzzing with “good grief we have meetings by the minute and a conversation every day, communication is NOT a problem for us”. This may be true, but those meetings only mean that you are talking about current daily initiatives, not about new ideas that will take the firm to the next level. Many firms believe that by placing a suggestion box in the break room and then telling their team to fill out the form and you will review it will make new ideas just flow through the system. Trust me when I say that most firms that try this approach get more cobwebs out of the box than actual suggestions. The process that you set up and the actual excitement in the message needs to happen 1) when you announce the initiative, 2) when you have ideas flowing and 3) when an idea is actually implemented. Communication is not just about great ideas – it is about the number of ideas produced. Good ideas produce spectacular ideas, so the more that are flowing, the better the ideas get.

### **Reward and Recognize the Individual**

When you see the word reward – the implication is “cash”. Let's face it, cash is certainly one motivator but it is not the only motivator. As you build out the firm's processes for idea generation remember that reward and recognition are important to overall adoption and motivation. Consider a tiered approach:

- *Level 1: Submit an idea* – receive a certificate, recognition at a staff meeting, or employee's name on the firm's electronic bulletin board.
- *Level 2: Idea is chosen for consideration* – cash award, traveling trophy, or a gift certificate.
- *Level 3: Idea turns into a firm project for implementation* – an additional day off or a larger cash bonus.

The most important part of the program is creating excitement, fun and ultimately tremendous ideas that will make the firm better. Leaders of the firm will be pleased

with the results if they encourage the team to speak up and be a part of the ongoing

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