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**'Before everything else, getting ready is the secret of success.'
- Henry Ford**



Become the Manager Everyone Wants to Work For

By George Witt, AAM



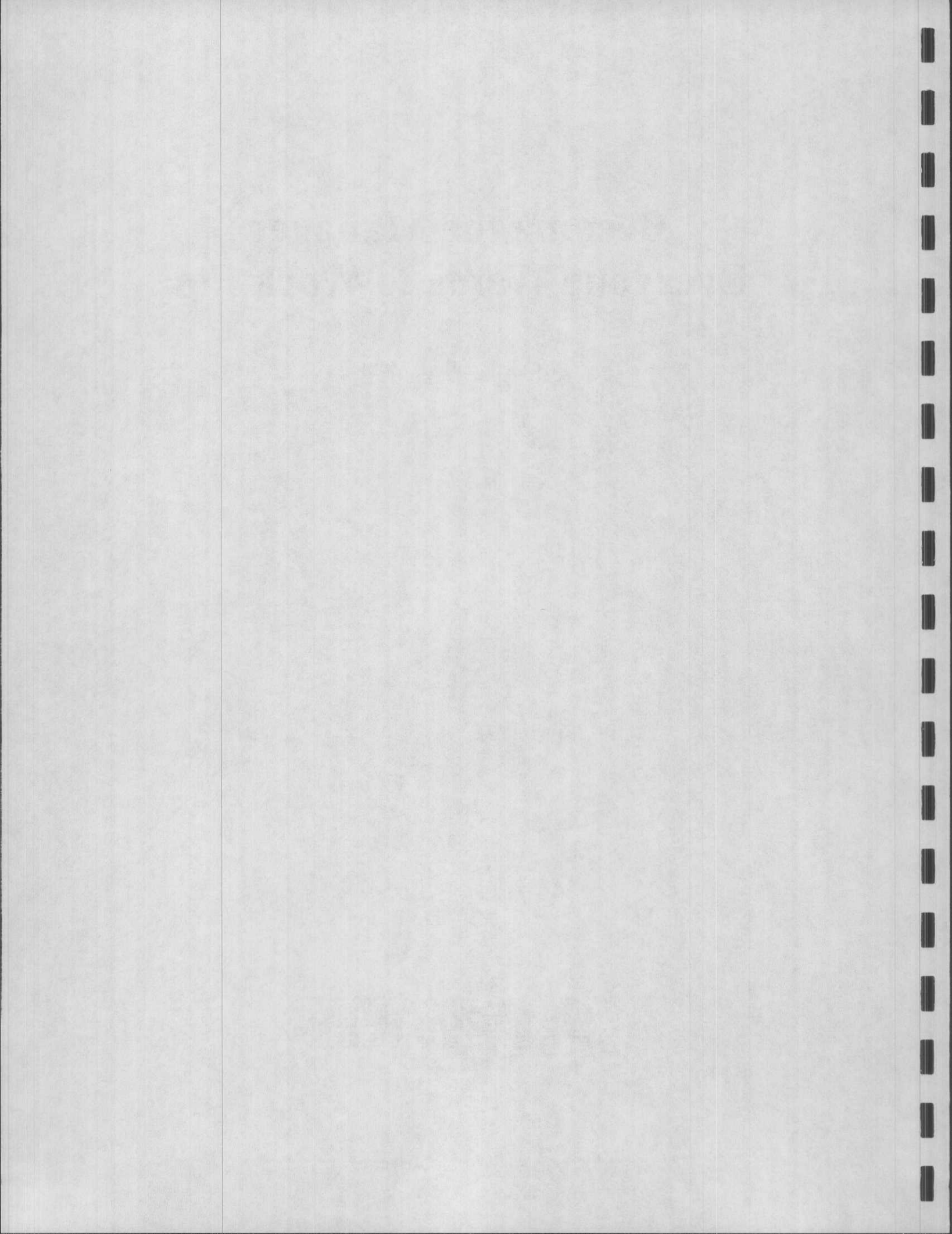


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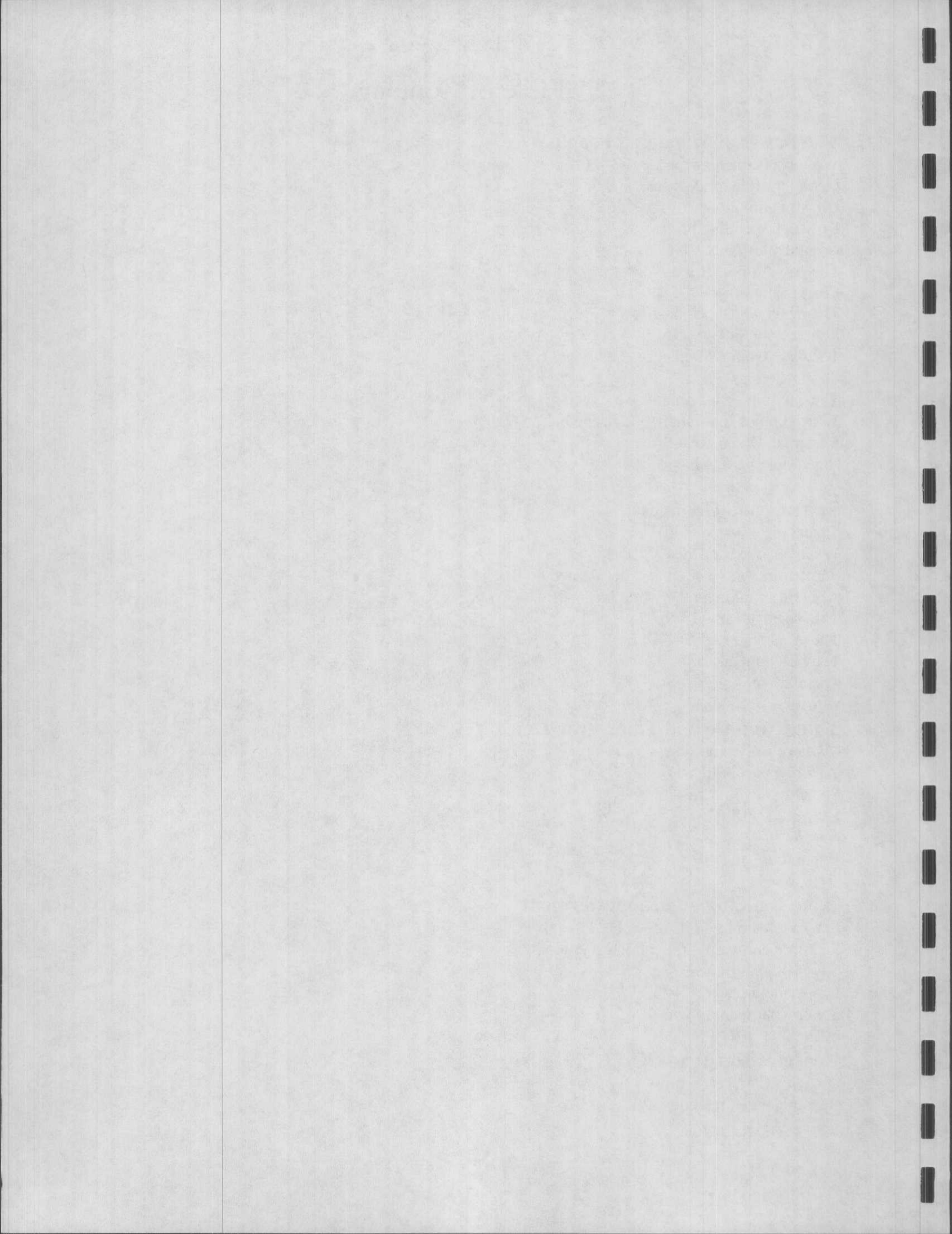
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The Basics of Managing People

Who Wants to Work For a Jerk?

Nobody wants to work for a jerk. A jerk is always criticizing the workers and telling them how inadequate they are. A jerk is always placing obstacles in the way of progress. A jerk holds people accountable for things the people can't control.

A jerk sets people up to fail. A jerk comes up with stupid unworkable ideas and expects his people to make them work. He then belittles *them* because they don't work. When any worker comes up with a good idea, he proceeds to tell them how that won't work and is a dumb idea. A really good jerk will take those good ideas and come up with them himself later, taking credit for the concept.

A jerk disciplines others for the same bad things he does himself. If you see yourself in any of the above situations, keep reading.

Good Jerk Role Models

Dabney Coleman plays a great jerk in the movie "9 to 5". He won't let any of the workers display photos in their work area. Personalizing their own work area is prohibited. Rules are repressive and designed to beat down the workers.

The comic strip "Dilbert" is making its author rich off real life examples of how not to manage people. He doesn't even have to come up with any original material—workers all over the country keep him well supplied with classic stories of bad management.

The reason for my class material is to keep you from unwittingly committing those same mistakes. These are role models you should seek to avoid.

Oh, You Animal

I became impatient as a college student in my Psychology classes. We were studying animal behavior, like mice and rats. I wanted to study *people* behavior. I failed to adequately comprehend at the time the commonality between people and animals. We are animals and animal behavior is strikingly similar to human behavior.

Training people is no different than training animals. Zig Ziglar claimed to be a flea trainer. He said you could put fleas in a glass jar with a lid then watch them jump up and hit the lid repeatedly. Eventually, they'd learn they could only jump to a height just below the lid, where they didn't hit it. At that point, he claimed, you could remove the lid but the fleas couldn't jump out. Prior to the "training" they could have easily jumped out. They were finally trained to learn their new limitations. Jerks routinely train people to perform short of their potential by placing obstacles in their way.

Elephant training is extremely cruel. Wild elephants are restrained

then beaten continuously for days until they give up on the idea of escape. Once they learn they can't escape, they'll accept direction from people.

Baby elephants are chained to huge stakes driven into the ground. Mature elephants are chained to little bitty stakes. This seems backwards, but the truth is the mature elephants have already learned they can't pull up the stake, so they've given up trying. There have actually been cases of elephants dying in fires because they "couldn't" pull up the stake.

Jerks train people to fail and always point it out when they do.

How to Train Animals

Once you understand how to train an animal, you'll better understand how to train people. If you want to train a dog to sit, do you command the dog to sit and then swat them with a newspaper if they don't? Not if you ever want the dog to sit....

You train the dog by ordering it to sit while pulling up on the collar and pressing down on the rump. The dog will naturally sit and then you say, "good boy". This positive reinforcement lets the dog know what you want him to do. He has no idea what he *shouldn't do*, but he knows what he should do.

You train people the same way. You show them how to do it and praise them when they do.

One of the common failures of American Management is lack of follow-through. People are instructed what to do then the manager walks away. This really doesn't give adequate direction. It is often followed up with criticism when the worker doesn't do it quite right. Criticism is negative and discouraging. People don't like to hear what they're not doing right, they much prefer to do it right and get recognition for it.

The correct way to train is to tell them how to do it, show them how to do it, *then let them do it* and correct them from there. This should be repeated until the worker has a clear idea of exactly how it should be done. At each step in the process it's extremely important to praise each correct step in an encouraging manner. The more time you spend in the beginning, the better the end results will be.

This highlights the importance of good job descriptions. The job description describes good behavior and sets performance standards.

Complex Training

Anyone with patience and good directions should be able to train a dog to sit. It's a simple task. What if you wanted to train the dog to stand on its hind feet and spin around once?

You can't wait until the dog performs the entire trick right to praise them. You won't get anywhere. You have to take it in stages. First, you have to get the dog to stand on its hind feet. This will take some work and a lot of praise. Then, you have to get the dog to turn slightly at first.

The point is, praise must be given for things done **approximately**

right in the beginning. You can't wait for the dog to do it exactly right. Close has to count.

Training people to do complex tasks has to take the same form. In the beginning, you must praise them for doing it approximately right. After they can do it part way, you slowly get more exact until they get it exactly right. This takes time, patience and lots of encouragement.

The Power of Electricity

Few things in the universe get the attention of animals and humans quicker than an electric shock. Electric fences are the easiest way to keep animals in an enclosed area. Shock collars really get the attention of a dog.

One of the first things the apprentice mechanic learns is what a spark plug wire does.

A negative comment from the boss is the same concept and has a similar effect. The worker gets zapped.

Too many managers practice the "leave alone, zap" method of management. When the worker does things right, they get ignored. When the worker does one thing wrong, they get zapped, regardless of how many previous things they've done right.

When asked how things are going at work, too many people will say, "I must be doing OK, I haven't been zapped in a while". This is the stuff that buys Dilbert groceries.

A good manager uses electricity very judiciously. When appropriate, it's very effective. Used too often, it destroys morale.

Proper Ratios

The ratio of pats-on-the-back to kicks-in-the-butt should be around 5 to 1. A good manager is always on the lookout for people doing things **right**.

Praise must be specific. If it's too general, it looks like you're running for office and people won't respect it. It also shouldn't be given unless it's deserved. The worst thing you can do is praise mediocre performance—that will only bring more of it.

Examples of Praise:

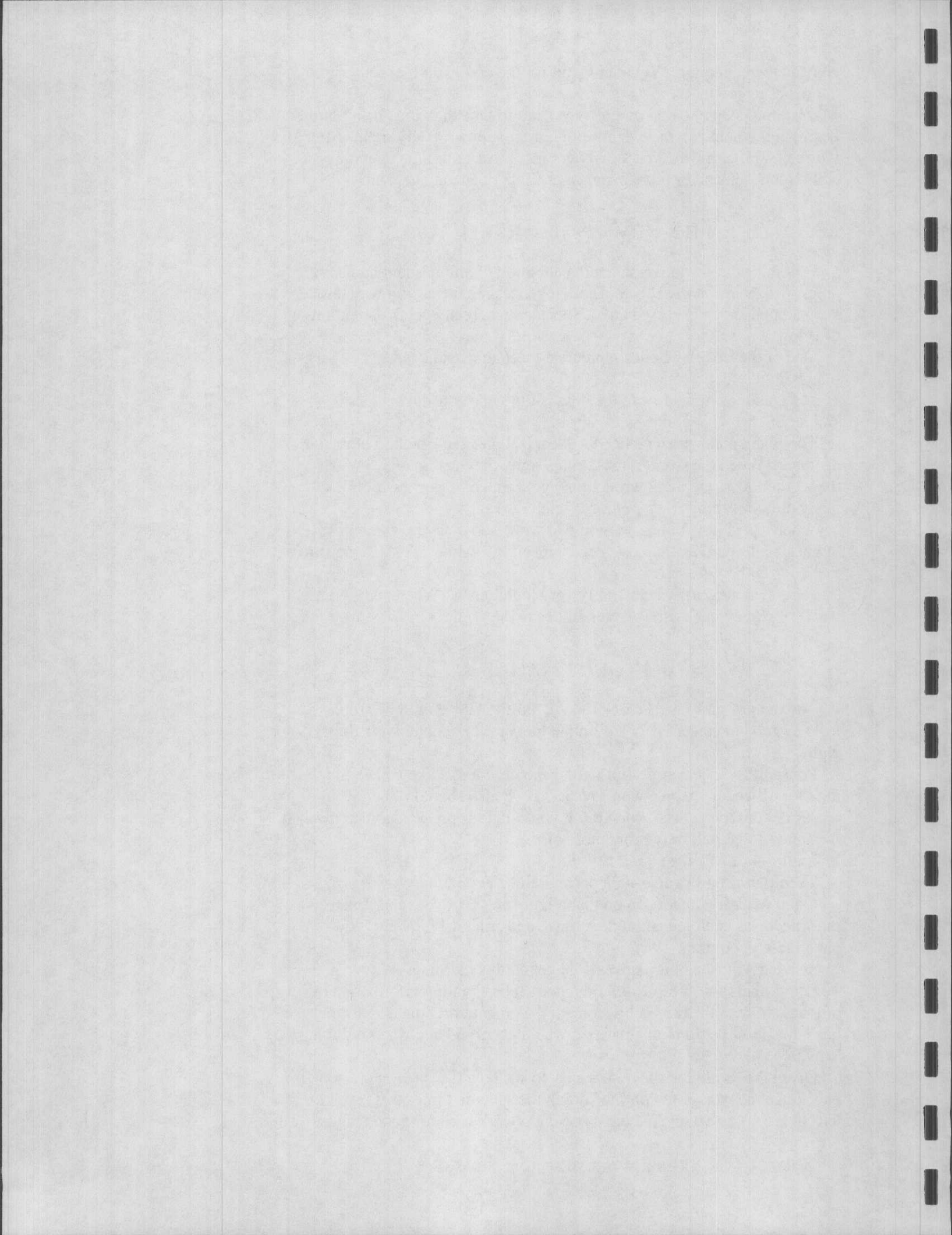
Technician bad praise— "You're doing a good job. Way to go".

Good praise— "Nice job on that alignment. I drove it and the steering wheel was centered and it drove nice and straight. You also completed it in good time. Way to go".

Service Advisor bad praise— "Nice job this morning. Way to go".

Good praise— "You really did a good job of getting information out of that lady with the drivability concern. You kept probing and asking questions until you'd really clarified what her car did and when it did it. Way to go".

Given the examples above, it's easy to see how the specific praise will encourage the worker to continue doing the specific things that result in excellence. You've given them a reason to work hard for good results.



The Manager as The Coach

Your job as a manager is to coach people to achieve excellence. Rather than seeing yourself as a beat cop whose job is to catch offenders, your job is really more that of a “nurturer of champions”.

A good coach will show his players the steps and techniques it takes to succeed at the task and provide the atmosphere that fosters the hard work it takes to master those techniques.

A good manager will spend a **significant amount of time** *catching people doing things right* and praising them for it.

Praise in Public

Always try to praise in public and **reprimand in private**. *Never* hold a meeting and gripe at the group if you only have a beef with a single (or a few) workers. This is a sure way to get people to regret meetings. Meetings should never be a “gripe session”.

If you’re going to give reprimands, do it privately and confidentially. Never talk about the problems of one worker with another worker. This is humiliating and degrading to all the workers.

On the other hand, if someone has done an outstanding job, be sure everyone knows about it. When publicly praising, be sure everyone who deserves recognition gets it, don’t leave anyone out.

This doesn’t mean you can’t privately praise someone. Praise can’t be contrived, it must be genuine and heartfelt. Give it as often as you can.

The One Minute Manager

A “must read” for any manager is a short little book by Ken Blanchard entitled the “One Minute Manager”. It only takes a few hours to read and is a blueprint for successful personnel management.

Reading it will get you excited about managing people and make it easier for you to win at that job.

After you’ve read it, buy each of your workers a copy and hold some meetings using it as a guide.

Shop Meetings

If you’re going to build a team that works as a team, you need to meet as a team. Team meetings should always be on company time. It’s not fair to ask your workers to give up personal time for company projects.

When we have a meeting at our shop, we do it over the lunch hour. We put it on the schedule well in advance so we don’t have customers dropping off cars during that time. My wife, who normally works from home, comes to the shop to cover the phone and watch the office so we’re not interrupted. Avoiding interruptions is one key to a good meeting.

I always buy lunch for everyone, too. We spend the first part of the hour eating and talking, like on a normal lunch break. When we’re

done, we have our meeting. I must pay my people for this eating time, even though I'm providing the meal. If I require them to be there to eat, I must pay them to eat.

Federal work guidelines state that if you require attendance, you must pay the workers.

If our workers need their "lunch time" that day for personal business, they're allowed to clock out before or after the meeting for that purpose. If not, they've just made an extra hour of pay for that day.

The worst thing you can do is require attendance and not pay them. Not only is it against the law, it sets a poor precedent. If you're asking them to go out of their way for you, you must at least appear to go out of your way for them.

Meetings don't have to be held on a strict schedule, such as every 3rd Wednesday, or even on a regular basis. They should be held for specific reasons or to accomplish specific objectives. The last thing you want to do is hold a meeting because you're supposed to, with no real purpose in mind.

Make meetings meaningful and positive. **Never** hold negative meetings. Your staff should always look forward to meetings, not dread them like the Plague.

Start your first meetings with the "One Minute Manager" as your theme. Figure out what sections of the book to cover and let everyone know that the meeting will cover the book up to page __. Allow some time for discussion and encourage everyone to provide some input.

Managing people using the principles in the book is much easier if your staff understands what you're trying to do. This will also allow *them* to coach *you* on how you're doing as a manager. After all, you're going to need some help with this new project yourself.

The One Minute Reprimand

We've discussed the Carrot, now we need to cover the Stick. Ken Blanchard will tell you the one minute reprimand is pretty simple. It consists of telling the worker what they did wrong, how you feel about it and following it up with your affirmation of their ability to do the job right.

Your most important objective is to focus their attention on **what they did that was wrong**, not on how you treated them. In too many cases, the worker gets reamed for doing something wrong and leaves, thinking what an SOB the boss is. This won't help correct the behavior, it only promotes resentment and leads to poor morale.

One key thing is to not involve the person or their character in the reprimand. Only the behavior is to be addressed. Smart people can still do dumb things.

Which Comes First—The Good or the Bad?

If you're going to tell a worker something bad and something good, which do you do first?

You always cover the bad things first. If you always tell them the good things first, they won't hear it; they're waiting to get creamed. Done like this on a routine basis, praise will become ineffective, since they've become accustomed to the inevitable negative which is sure to follow (even when it doesn't).

Reprimand Example

Your worst worker, Louie, has developed a habit of coming into the office and complaining to the Service Advisor about work assignments in front of customers.

He recently told the Service Advisor he's tired of getting these stupid squeak and rattle jobs and he's not going to fix this one. A good customer was sitting right there when he said it.

You must take Louie aside and use the following calm approach—"Louie, you just berated a Service Advisor right in front of a customer. That kind of behavior is not acceptable. In the first place, the SA can't do anything about it when he's busy with a customer. That might have been the customer's car you were talking about. This behavior really makes the whole shop look bad to that customer and our customers are where our money comes from. Your actions may have just cost the shop future business. That behavior is immature and counterproductive" (You've just told Louie what he did that was wrong).

"Let me tell you how I feel about that. I'm very disappointed in that approach and I feel like your behavior has let me down. Behavior like that just can't be tolerated here" (You've made it clear to Louie how that makes you feel).

"Louie, you should be ashamed of what you did. You know better than that and I expect more from you. Think about what you just did and how it affects all of us. I know you can avoid that in the future. I'm counting on you" (You've let Louie know you believe in his character and ability).

If you're lucky, Louie will go back to work thinking about what he *did* that was wrong. He won't be sore at you for hurtful things you said about him personally.

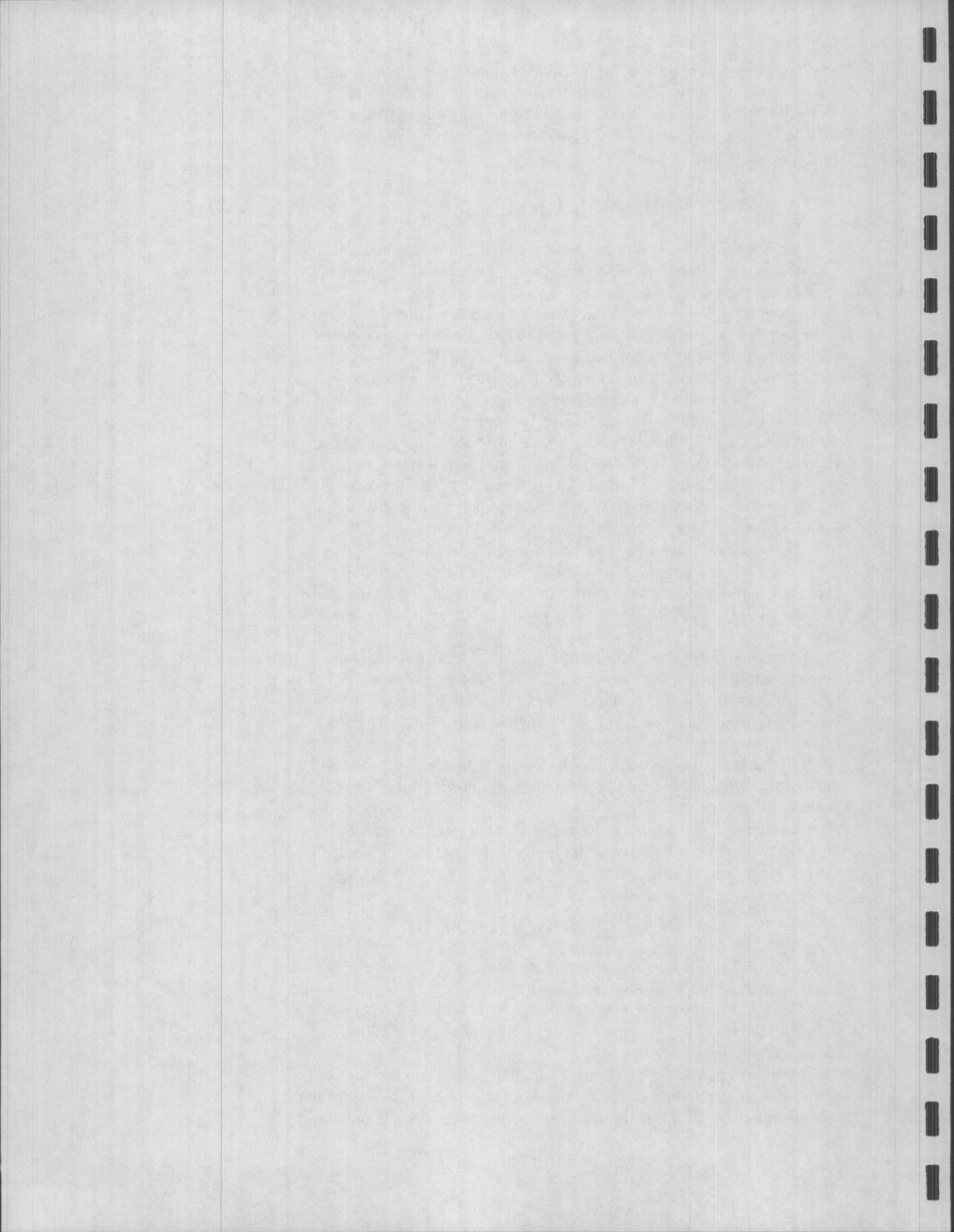
It's very important not to tell Louie he's stupid or self-centered. Statements like that can hurt or anger him. You want to modify behavior, not make your people mad.

Rewarding Poor Behavior

One of the biggest mistakes a manager can make is to reward poor behavior and punish good behavior. What?

Sure. Suppose the trashcan is overflowing and scraps of paper are falling on the floor. So, you ask Louie (your worst worker) if he would please take out the trash.

He heaves a heavy sigh, obviously put out by your request. He then grabs the trashcan abruptly, spilling some of the contents. He stomps out the office door, spilling paper as he goes and slams the door behind him.



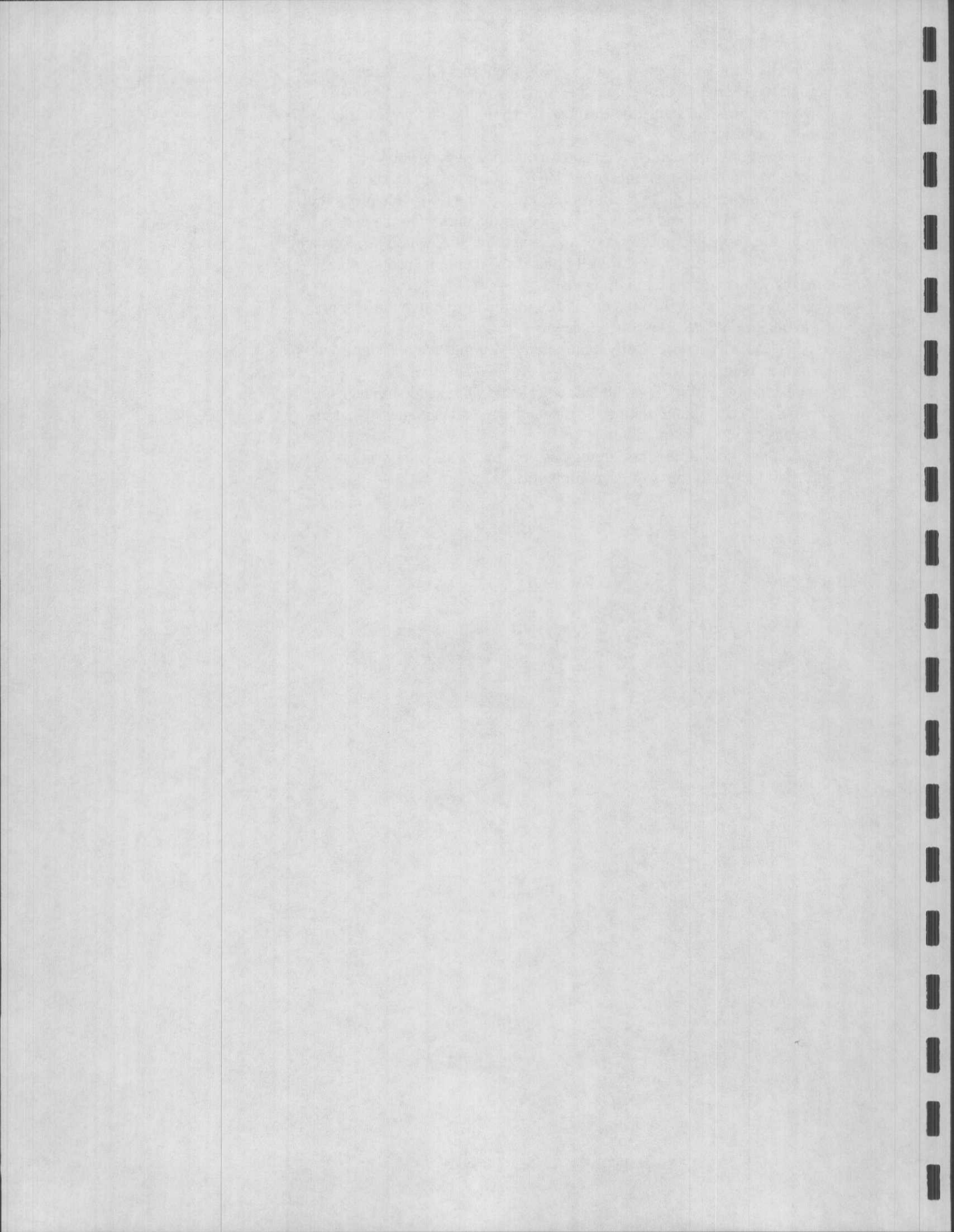
He's really letting you know how he feels about this job. All the way through the shop he's dropping paper and making a mess as he goes. When he returns, he slams the trashcan down in his final protest, then gives you a last glare.

The next day, the can is full again. You ask Frankie (your best worker) to handle the task this time. He carefully pushes all the paper down into the can to make room for the stuff on the floor. He picks it all up, puts it in the can and heads cheerfully for the door. On the way through the shop, he spots a wayward piece of plastic, which he stops and picks up. On his return, he carefully places the can in its proper place and asks you if you need anything else.

Bonus question: When the can is full on the third day, who you gonna ask to take it out? (Raise-your-grade answer: It probably won't be Louie.) Louie has successfully manipulated you into not reassigning this job to him again.

This type of activity is practiced to perfection by dealership techs, who are skilled at manipulating the dispatcher. You can guess what effect it has on work assignments.

Be on the lookout for this strategy as you deal with your workers. Don't fall victim to this sort of manipulation.



Systems and Changes

Success is a System

As you find areas of performance shortcomings in your operation, look at the systems in place at your shop. Systems are a series of steps each worker must take to complete the overall objective: the fixed car and the happy customer.

Good systems make it harder for the worker to fail than to succeed. If you have good people who make repeated mistakes in the same areas, it may be that your system is too difficult to execute.

A simple example is communicating to the tech what work was sold to the customer. Each labor line on the repair order should have the time sold for that operation, so the tech knows right away how much time he can spend on it. A very common mistake is for the Service Advisor to think of .2 to inspect something and the tech spends 1.0. This causes problems for everyone. The tech is unhappy because he probably lost billed time, the SA is unhappy because he now has to deal with an unhappy tech and an unhappy customer, the shop is unhappy because it lost billed time and the customer may be unhappy because of an unexpected expense. Everybody loses.

This is a system failure. If every sold operation always has the time on it, no further communication is needed and this situation is easily avoided.

Another example is when you've recommended 5 items to the customer and they buy 2 of them. If you take the repair order back to the tech and tell them which 2 the customer bought, they may not always remember what you said and may fix the wrong things. We handle this at our shop by using a yellow hi-lighter to show which items were sold.

Anything in yellow is sold, anything not in yellow isn't sold. This system is absolutely fail-proof (unless Louie is involved).

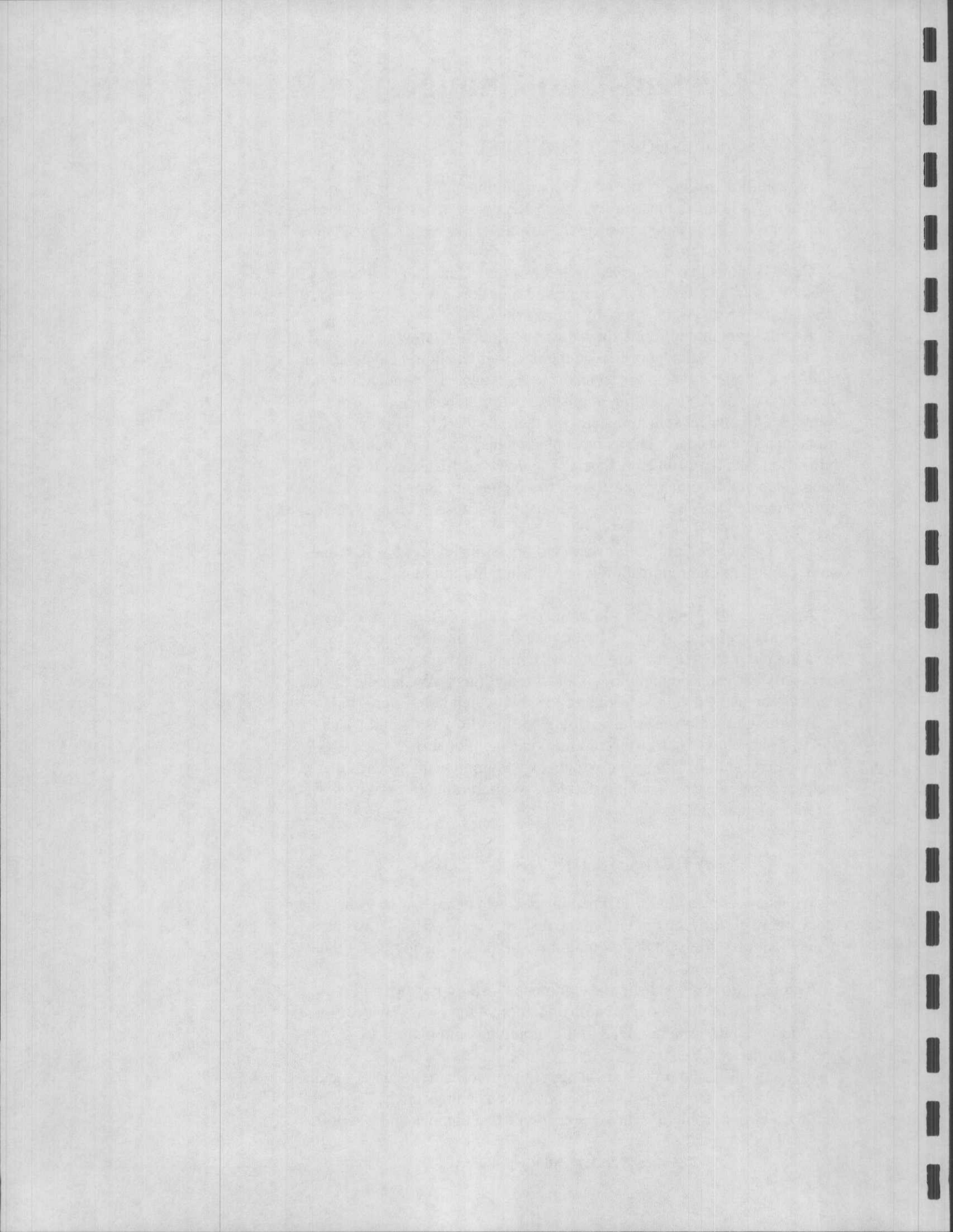
As you examine "what went wrong", try to implement systems that make success as easy as falling off a log. Workers should have to work at failure, not at success.

When Change is Needed

When it becomes obvious something needs to change, always involve the workers performing the task in the discussion. Mr. Honda was adamant about this. He said those doing the work knew the job better than anyone else.

Failure to do this results in those famous "LSD" company policy changes. You know, whoever came up with that idea was obviously on LSD because *everyone* involved in the situation could plainly see it wasn't going to work.

In many cases, the proposed change is incorrectly the focus of the discussion. What I mean by this is, the boss has a change and believes it will fix the root problem. The workers don't like the idea and a serious



discussion ensues *about the change*.

A wise manager will state the objective first, then volunteer the change. If the workers don't like the change, serious discussion can ensue about *how best to reach the objective*. There is a huge difference between the two situations.

Colin Powell said that, during the information gathering and discussion part of a process, he welcomes a challenge from subordinates; it shows everyone is thinking. A subordinate should never fear speaking out against a superior officer during this period.

However, he continued, once a decision has been reached and a choice of action decided upon, those opposed are expected to bury their own feelings and go with the group.

Sometimes, You Just Let 'Em Get Burned

Every once in a while, the workers are convinced their solution is the real fix. The manager can see it's the wrong way to go. If the group or individual is really passionate about their idea, sometimes it's best to allow them to pursue it and see for themselves why it won't work.

Experience is the best teacher. A good manager will avoid being seen as a stubborn autocrat and allow experience to work in appropriate occasions. This can build considerable respect for the manager.

Affecting Change in the Workplace

I've made a big deal out of systems that help people win at work. These systems can be your friend or your enemy. Systems work because they become a habit, second nature in the work routine. Breaking old habits can be difficult to do and take a long time to accomplish.

Let's say you have an idea to better market your shop, as my wife did. We send out oil change reminder postcards every week and, within a few days, the phone rings with customers seeking an oil change appointment and "whatever else it needs" (such as a timing belt and major maintenance?).

My wife's idea was to snag those customers who weren't coming to us for their oil changes by taking the date of their last oil change off our competitor's oil change sticker and recording that date on our repair order. She could then plug the date into our system and the customer would receive an oil change reminder from us *even though we didn't do the last one*.

The idea was sound, the concept and execution was simple. Everyone agreed it was the right way to go and an easy thing to do. Easy my foot!

The guys couldn't seem to remember to do it. This is a classic management issue. They've been doing it one way and you need for them to do it a different way.

Let me carefully qualify the situation before we progress any further. My front office staff is the best there is at what they do. They're the most conscientious, meticulous staff any manager could ever ask for, yet **they couldn't execute this simple plan!**

My wife would produce periodic data sheets showing the daily tally of cars that needed the oil change information and the number that actually had it. The data sheets had a percentage column showing the percentage of success. The first month was depressing. Less than 10% of the cars had the information recorded on the repair order and *I was the one who most frequently did it.*

Words of encouragement turned to brief reprimands over the next weeks, but the job still wasn't getting done.

So, I produced a little form that could be used to write down the information on each car received for service. We have to write on something, I reasoned, it might as well be this form that had **last LOF** prominently on the top of it. This didn't work, either.

We're now 3 months into the proposed change *that no one opposed* and we're getting nowhere. Compliance still hovered below 20%.

At this point, most managers would either browbeat the workers or give up on the change. After all, you think you've given this your best shot and it's not working. Please remember, we have a willing competent crew. Browbeating would only create resentment and a tense work environment. Unfortunately, too many managers continue browbeating with disastrous results. The other extreme, giving up, costs the company money in lost sales because a simple task is not being performed. It literally takes only seconds to accomplish. The hard part is forming the habit.

One of my guys is really good at sales and the other is really good at detail work. Since this was a detail job, I decided to give the responsibility to my detail guy. I asked him to create a labor code entitled **Next LOF Due** and add it to the top of every appointment for the next day. Once it was on the repair order, it was much easier to do since they had a reminder right there. The detail guy had one more daily task to perform which he could do at anytime during the day. That wasn't hard to accomplish.

Now, it still took careful monitoring on my part and the appropriate encouragement and timely praise for the job being done "approximately right" on a regular basis. After 4 months of this, we're now accomplishing the task on over 80% of the repair orders on a routine basis. The cars that don't get the reminder may well be customers that don't fit our desired customer profile. We kind of hope they *don't* come back real soon, if you know what I mean. That task is now a habit. It only took 6 months!!

My point is, when you have a number of changes you wish to make in your operation, limit the number of changes you undertake at one time. Initiating 6 changes at the same time is a sure recipe for failure.

Pick the one or two most important changes you wish to make, involve your people in the decision on the right method to use to accomplish the objective, then set up systems to make the change easy. Be prepared to stick it out until it gets done. It may take time and tweaking, be patient.

The Baggage Car

Remember Louie? He's my worst employee. For the record, I've never had anyone working at my shop named Louie or Frankie, they're fictitious characters. However, like the famous customer Everett Sinchou*, Louie's been at most every shop. Frankie makes less frequent appearances ;o).

The first step in dealing with Louie is to make sure it's really Louie, not just someone who looks like Louie.

What I mean is, everybody has some baggage, somewhere. One of my best techs consistently arrives late to work. It may be because we don't always have a job for every tech to start on first thing in the morning, it may be because that's the way he's built. I don't know and I don't care. That's about the only thing he ever does that I might find fault with. He performs every other aspect of his job in an admirable fashion, so I can live with this small amount of baggage he carries with him. Big deal.

There are many managers who will disagree that tardiness can be overlooked and that's the reason I chose this example. A tardy technician doesn't really upset things like a tardy Service Advisor. It's one thing if the tardiness doesn't affect the rest of the group, but if everyone else starts coming in late, that's quite another. You have to look at the real overall effect on the business before you act.

One of my all-time favorite "Dr. Laura" quotes is, "Is this the hill you want to die on?". Is this one thing the most important thing in the world to you, without which life is no longer worth living?

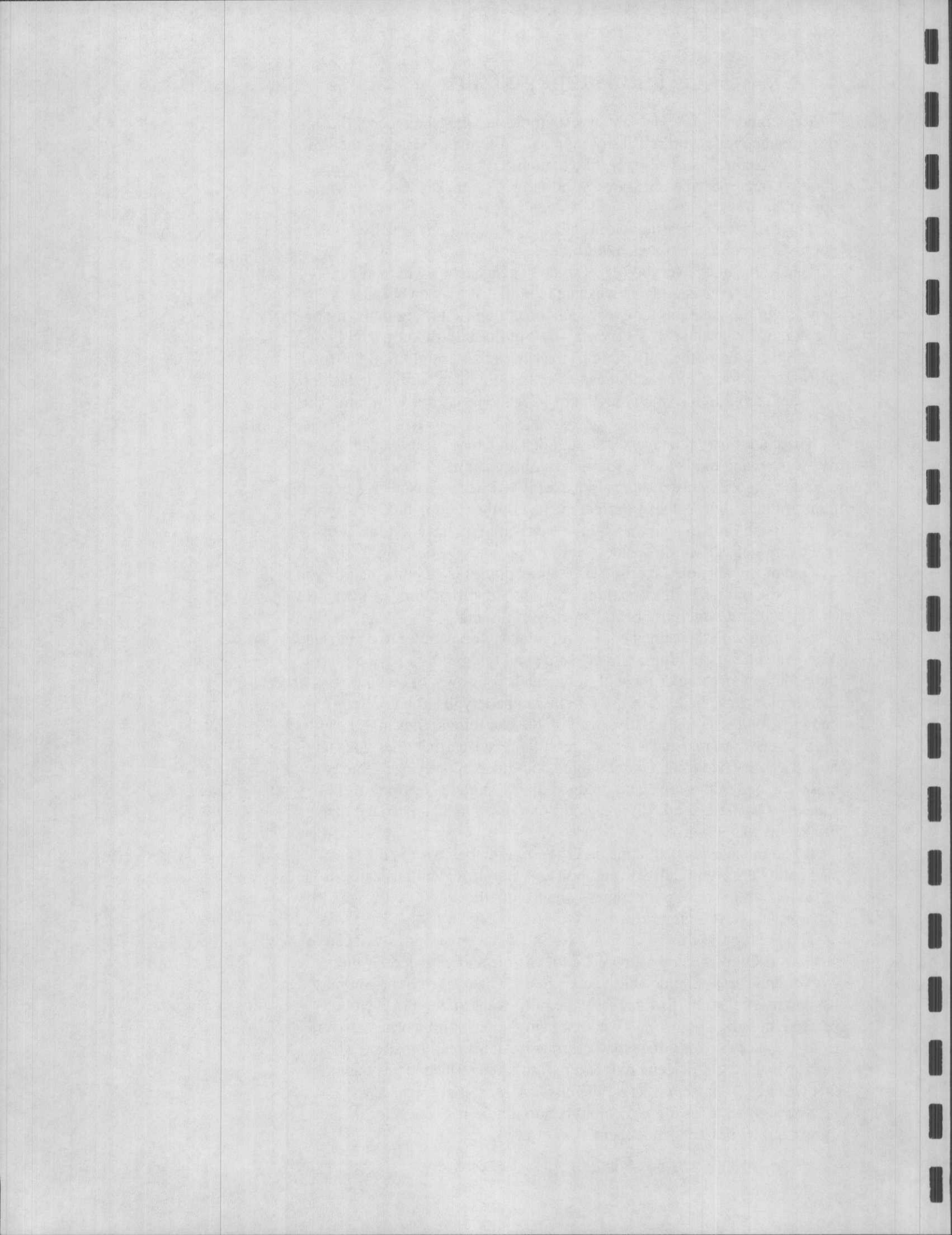
Working with the same people every day is very similar to a marriage. You get some good things, you get some bad things. You have to pick the people whose values most closely match your own. You have to pick the people whose bad habits are far outweighed by the good ones. The bad girlfriend will continually dwell on the bad things, figuring "I can fix *those* after we're married". Every good thing her partner does goes unnoticed, every bad thing is highlighted and dwelt upon. When things get tense, the bad things are again dredged up and paraded in front of the spouse. The net result is divorce court or worse—a bad marriage that just seems to get worse.

A bad manager is just like a bad spouse. The behavior is the same. Bad habits are continually dwelt upon and morale and enthusiasm for the job is lost until one of 3 outcomes is realized—the worker quits, gets fired or, worse yet, *they stay*.

The point of all this is simple—work to change the things you can in a positive fashion. Change can take a lot of time and patience. If the worker ends up not being able to change for whatever reason, you may have to ask yourself, "Is this really the hill I want to die on?". Nobody is perfect, including yourself. I've seen many good, solid workers driven from a good job over things that, ultimately, don't really matter. The worst part is, the replacement worker wasn't nearly as good as the one that was lost. The net effect on the business was, it got worse.

Know when to let it go. Learn when to ignore it. Watch for the good things and work to enhance them.

*Everett Sinchou fix my tire, my radiator leaks. Now you fix—I no pay!!



The Good “Talking To”

Inevitably, every one of your workers will be doing something that you need to change. In other words, they need a good talking to...

How you approach this situation dictates your success ratio. If you start off wrong, they naturally become defensive and you just end up in an argument. They get mad, you get mad, nothing changes except now you're both mad. If this happens often enough, you both end up with the dreaded “bad attitude”.

A “talking to” is not the same as a reprimand. A reprimand is a one-way communication, you talk and they listen. In the “talking to” phase, you're opening a dialog and seeking information. You want to know what's on their mind.

My studies in Psychology also taught me how to recognize “defense mechanisms”. A defense mechanism is a personality trait that covers up an undesirable part of a person's personality. Insecure people, for example, frequently act like they're better than everyone else. In high school, these were the people we called “stuck up”. They wouldn't associate with just anyone. After they grew up, they had to have expensive new cars and all the right designer labels on their clothes. Their defense mechanism was to have better things than others. This kept secret the fact that they really felt inferior to others.

There are many different defense mechanisms. You need to be prepared to encounter them and deal with them if you do much brain probing. The difficult part of managing people is getting past the outer defenses.

You should always seek to make statements or ask questions that are difficult to argue with. The easiest way to approach this is to focus on the behavior, not the individual. People can easily talk about behavior. Behavior is readily observed.

Back to Louie. Louie has recently developed that dreaded “bad attitude”. Let's use some power phrases (PP) in an attempt to start a dialogue about it. If you can find out “what's eating him”, you may be able to correct the behavior.

PP— **“Louie, the way you're behaving lately makes me think you're not real happy”.**

Louie— “You saying I'm not happy?” (This is a challenge and you're about to go nowhere).

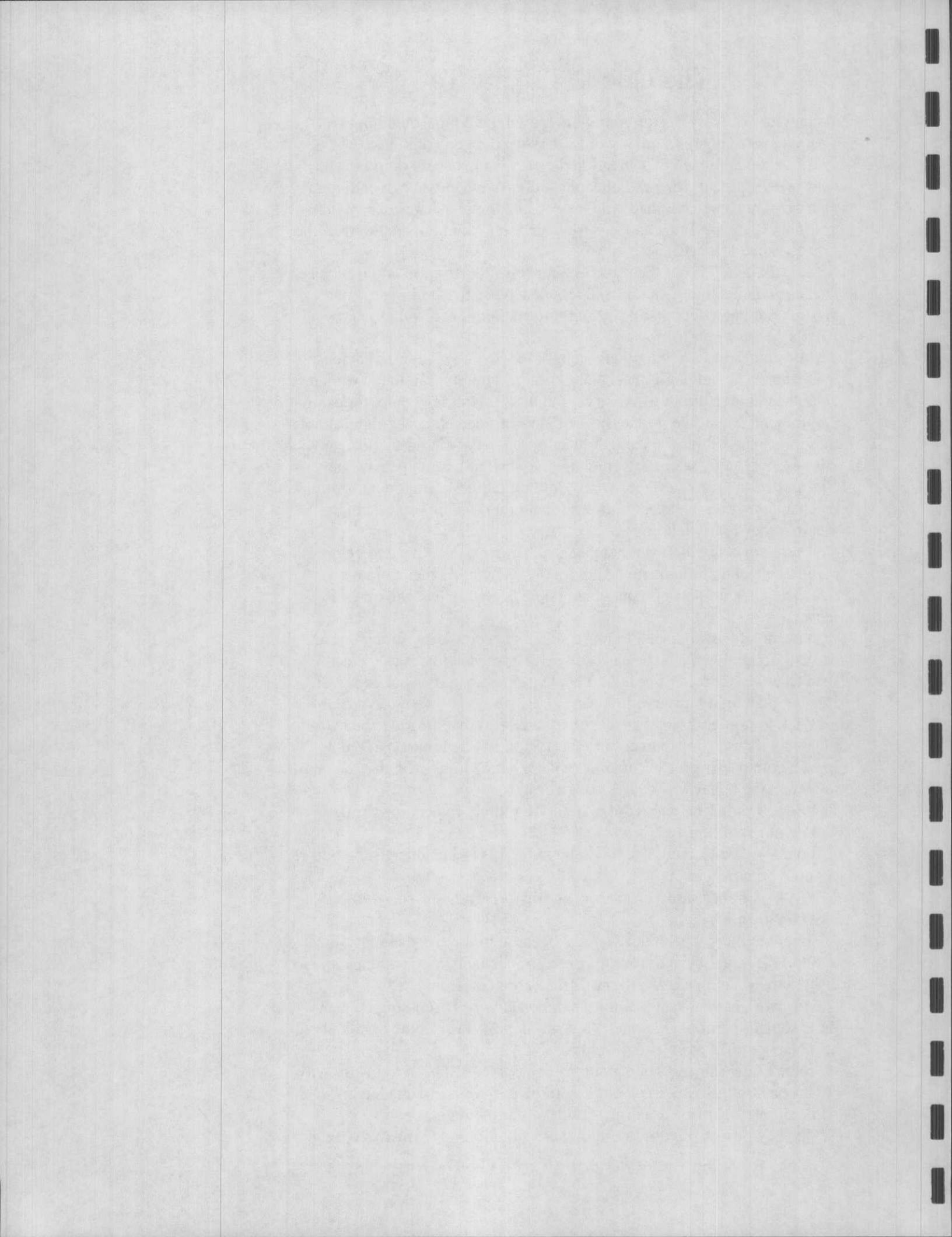
PP— **“ I never said you weren't happy. I said you're *behaving like you aren't*”.**

Louie will deny his inner feelings because to discuss them is a threat to him. He might have to reveal a defense mechanism. Getting people to discuss their feelings can be very difficult right up front.

However, anyone can plainly see the *behavior*. Discussing the behavior is something Louie *can* do. Your mission is to get Louie to talk about his behavior. This can lead to solutions.

Once Louie starts talking about his behavior, he'll have to justify why he's behaving that way. *Then* he can more easily discuss his feelings. After all, our behavior is a direct result of our feelings.

The key **power phrase** to use in these situations is to **always cite be-**



havior and state that:

“It looks like...”

“It appears as though...”

“The way you act makes me think...”

Another way to address bad behavior is to cite the behavior and simply ask them why they’re behaving that way.

“You’ve recently started ___ (cite behavior), why would you act that way?”.

“How would you expect that behavior like that would benefit the shop?”.

You can’t discuss behavior using generalities. You’ll get challenged and you’ll lose, because they’ll just deny it. You have to cite specific examples. If you can be specific, you’re in a better position to win. The more recent the example, the better. Dredging up something that occurred 6 months ago is totally counterproductive. What happened yesterday is what matters.

A key to good negotiating skills is to never place blame.

While you’re in this “fact-finding” mode, don’t be too quick to offer solutions. That could cause them to stop talking and you may not find out the *real reason* for their behavior. In sales, the first objection offered by a prospect most likely isn’t the real reason for their actions. Simply agree with what they say and continue to ask, “So what else is bothering you?”. Once they accept you’re really listening and there’s no retribution on the horizon, they’ll open up more and you’re more likely to get at the real truth.

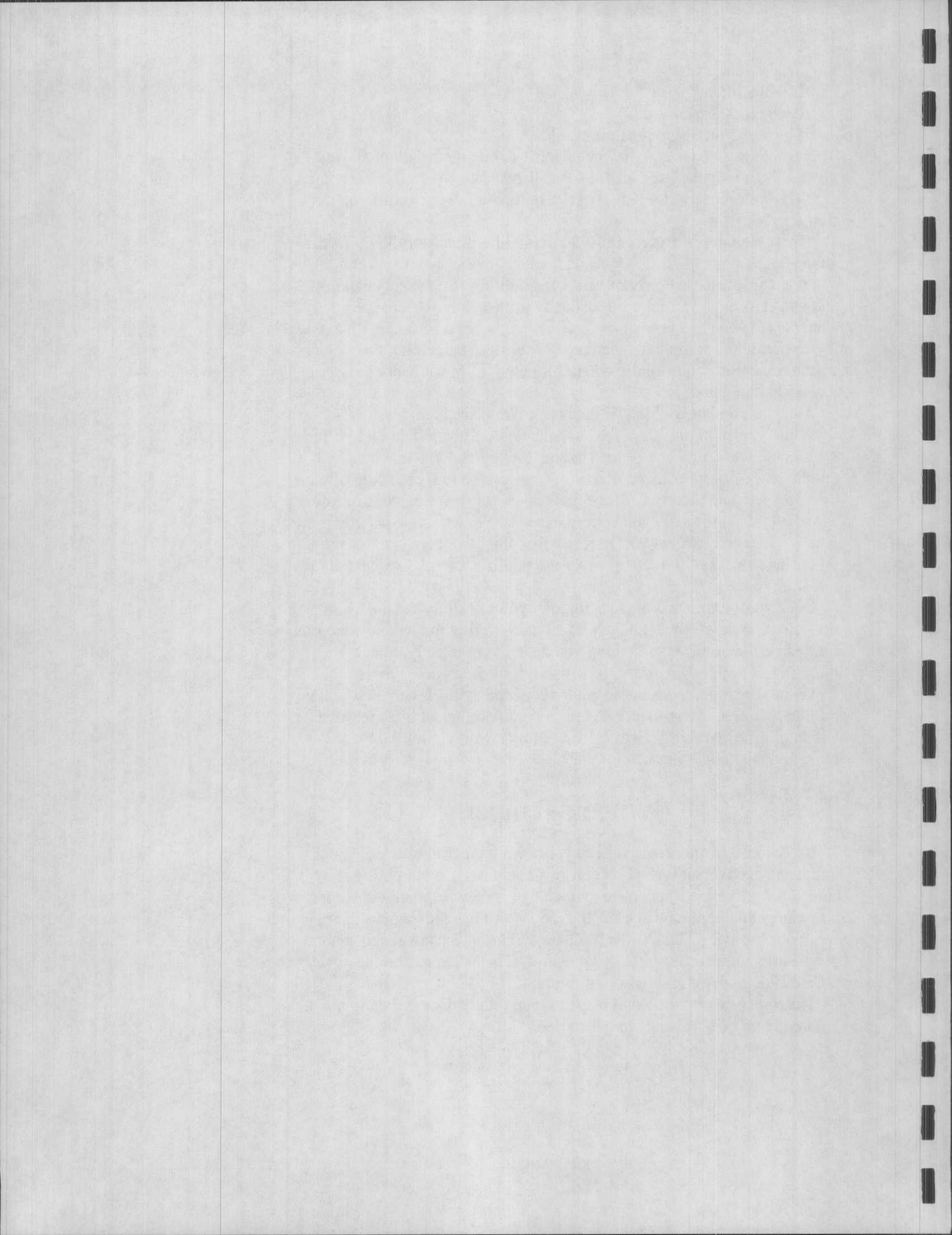
Once you’ve finished the fact-finding, you can study possible solutions that can be offered at a later meeting. Offering immediate solutions may cause you to offer something you haven’t completely thought through and you may regret it, or worse yet, want to “take it back”.

Do be sure to let them know you’re concerned about them and will get back to them regarding their concerns. Try to do this within a reasonable length of time. Nothing’s worse than telling a worker you’ll do something and then not doing it.

Temper, Temper

It’s extremely important to keep your own temper in check. Don’t initiate any conversations when you’re already mad. Wait until you’ve cooled off. Many workers have learned that if they respond with anger, they can get an argument started and they won’t have to address their own poor behavior. This is the ultimate defense mechanism and some people are, unfortunately, really good at it. This is the reason the power phrase and your response is so important.

The right power phrase and response can totally disarm the argument before it ever gets a chance to get started.



The Outcome

There are several possible outcomes to the “talking to”. The most desirable is that the worker has a concern you can fix. If Louie is all bent out of shape because his air hose leaks or won’t stay connected, the fix is easy—get Louie a new air hose.

If, on the other hand, he’s unhappy over something you can’t fix, it gets more difficult. If you can’t fix the situation, you have to fix Louie.

Louie may be unhappy because he wants more money and he’s already making more than he should (considering Louie, this isn’t hard to imagine!).

In this case, you’re going to have to cite industry standards for technician wages and show Louie that he’s being paid a greater percentage than he’s entitled to. You may also point out that if production could be increased, he has the opportunity to earn more. Perhaps his poor behavior contributes to low production. Maybe if he worked more diligently at making other worker’s jobs easier, everyone could make more money.

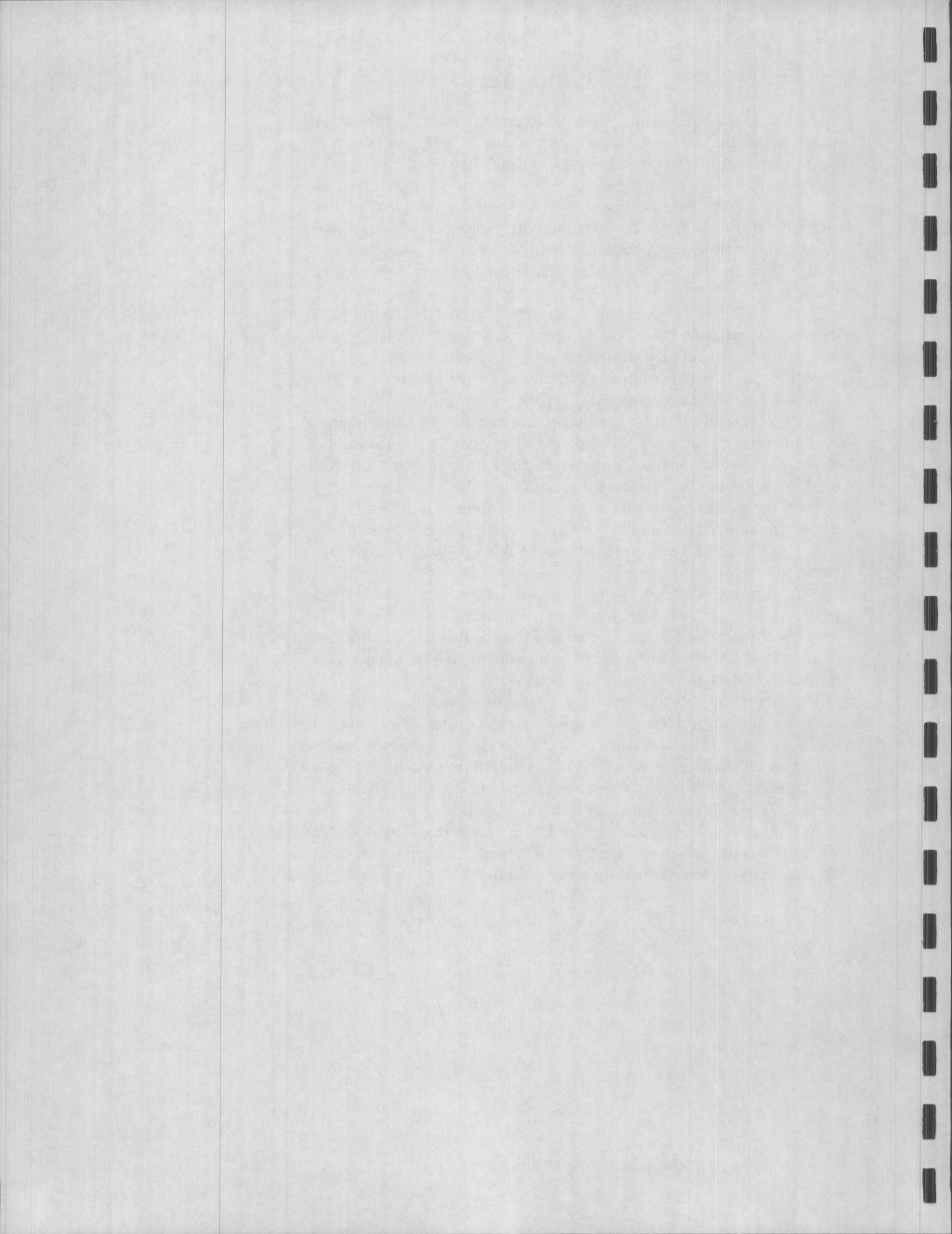
You shouldn’t always feel compelled to answer all concerns right on the spot. In many cases, additional research or study is called for. If this is the case, do the research and get back to Louie later.

The single most important objective is that you reach a consensus agreement on what’s troubling your worker. They have to agree on the issues. If you can’t agree on “what’s really wrong”, you can’t take any steps to correct it.

This is another defense mechanism—subterfuge. They don’t risk rejection if they don’t tell you everything. To “lay their souls bare” is a very threatening thing to some people. If they do that and nothing happens, it’s a disaster. Many people find it easier to give you a bunch of meaningless stuff and avoid the key issues.

The key issues may also be things outside the workplace. Domestic problems, money problems as a result of things beyond their control (like medical expenses) can destroy a worker’s morale and there may not be a thing you can do about it. Anyone who’s been through a divorce knows that the feeling of failure is a common emotion in that situation. In some cases, all you may be able to offer is moral support.

Whatever you do, you can’t ignore Louie’s concerns. The worst thing you can do is to get Louie to finally open up and talk, then ignore what he says. **Always have a follow-up conversation.**



Things You Do and Things You Don't

My Way or the Highway

I hope you never say this to a worker unless you're down to the "parting shots" and are actually firing them at the time.

Resist the temptation to constantly remind people whose name is on the door and "who signs their paycheck". They know all too well and don't need daily reminders whose Fiefdom they're in.

You should never threaten a person with their job unless you mean it. This would only take place during the "final written warning", which we'll cover later.

I once worked for a very abusive boss. He'd put up signs all over the place, threatening workers. In the bathroom, we'd find cheery reminders on the roll towel cabinet that encouraged good behavior like, "If you don't change the towel when it runs out, you'll be fired—The Management".

I just hate signs but I hate them even worse when they're signed "The Management"—like some guy down the street is really going to come in and put up those signs. *Of course it's The Management, stupid!*

Watch Your Mouth

Never complain to your workers about things over which they have no real control or about little things that don't really matter.

You should **never** say:

"You people are using too much hand cleaner".

"The light bill is too high—turn out the lights".

"Everybody around here is making more than me".

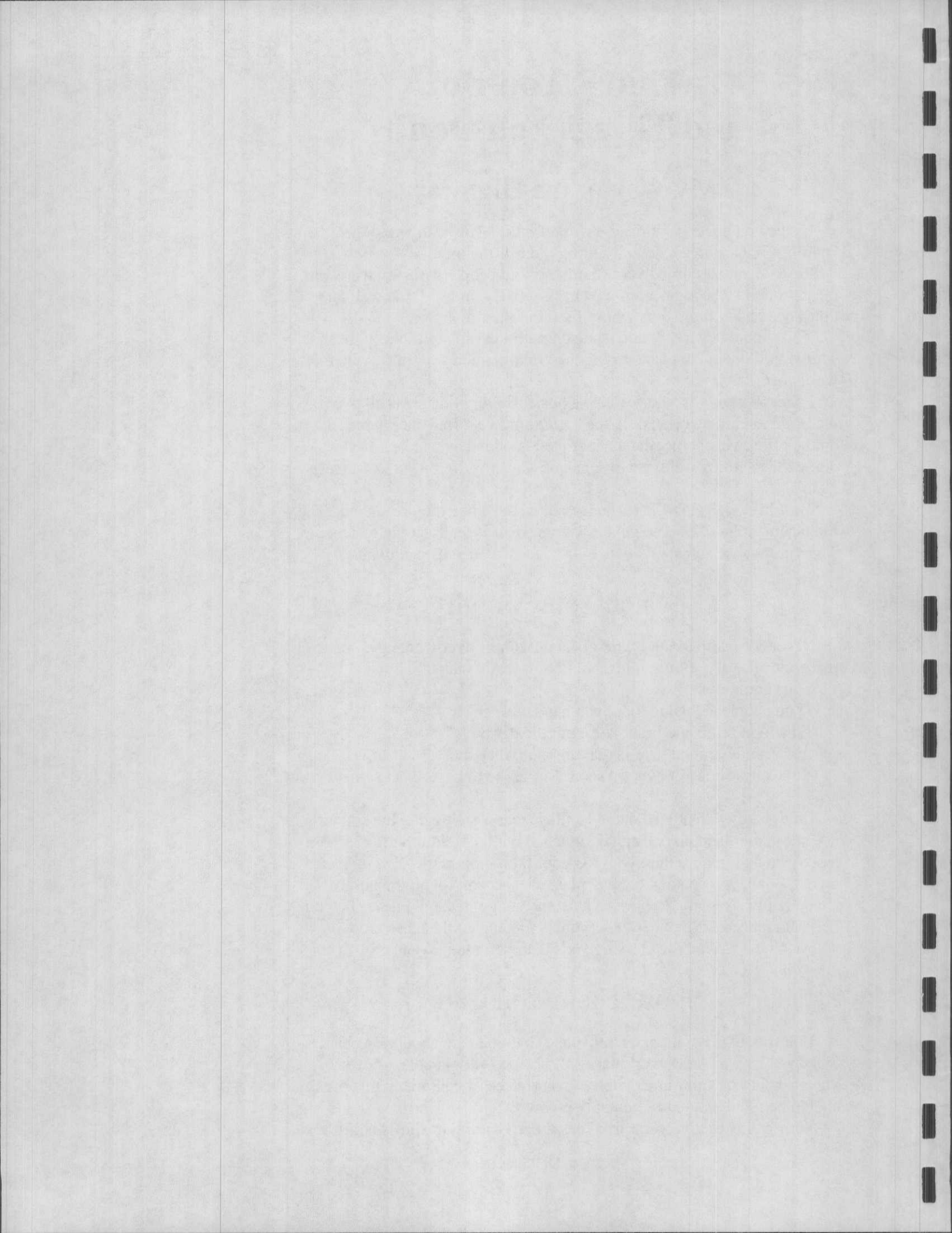
"If business doesn't pick up soon, I'm going to have to let someone go".

Unless they're using so much hand cleaner it's clogging the sink, it doesn't matter, and no one can do much about the light bill. If everyone really is making more than you, it's your fault, not theirs. *You* offered them the job, *you* decided the pay plan and *you* control all the numbers. If you really are going to have to let someone go, it should never be publicly announced. It threatens everyone's job and could cause more of your workers to read the classified ads than you might want.

Show Them You Care

You should make it abundantly clear that you care about all your workers. This includes workplace safety. You should address every known safety hazard immediately. Every piece of equipment that breaks should be fixed as soon as humanly possible.

Your job is to give your workers an environment that's conducive



to doing their best work. They can't do their best work while trying to make something work that's broken or that may give them an electric shock.

Your job is to set them up so they can win. No business can have happy customers until they first have happy workers. No amount of money in the world is worth it if you dread going to work when you wake up in the morning.

Your job is to stay out of the way and let them work. Far too many times, the workplace is humming along nicely. Then the boss comes in, stirs up a bunch of stuff and leaves the place in chaos.

Don't micro-manage good people. Hire good people, train them well, install systems that make it hard to fail then stay out of their way.

Let It Ride

You should accept the fact that some very good workers are never really happy. I've spent far too much time in the past trying to make everyone happy without realizing that some people just never will be.

Some techs will just always moan about work assignments. Sometimes, when hearing this tired complaint repeated one more time, the best response may be, "Well, I guess it just sucks to be you".

I've also told a tech who complained about every little job that wasn't a "super gravy" ticket to get someone else to do it for him. Naturally, he understood no one wanted to do the job and he was stuck with it. You have to learn when to listen and when to have a deaf ear.

No Can Do

Just as you have to learn what to ignore, it's equally important to learn what you can never ignore.

Never ignore abusive behavior. Never ignore harassment of one worker by another.

Harassment or abuse may take different forms. "The joke" is the most common. Someone does something really rotten to another and claims it was just a joke. In my opinion, a joke is only a joke if **everyone** involved is laughing. If **just one person** doesn't think it's funny, it's not a joke.

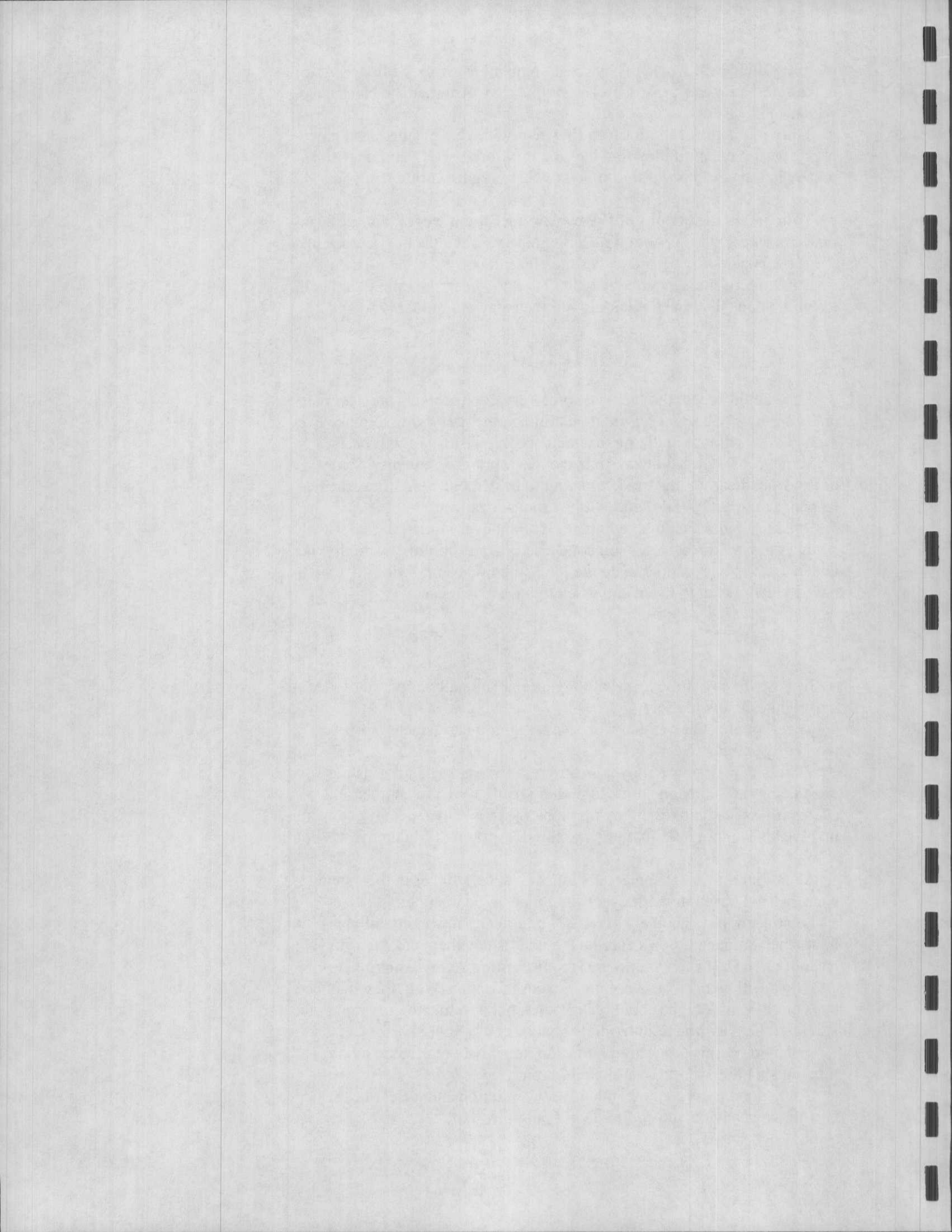
An abuser may steal someone's lunch or stick a finger in their sandwich. That's not funny either and should never be tolerated.

I don't care how good a worker is, I don't care how many billable hours they produce, I don't care how much money they make for you—**it's not enough if their behavior is a disruption to the workplace.**

"Boys will be boys" is a common excuse for this. Well, they may be boys on the junior high school playground, but it's time to grow up. Don't let the playground bully draw a paycheck at your shop.

Behavior of this type should draw an immediate reprimand every time. It should never be overlooked or tolerated.

Doing good work requires intense concentration and a clear head. Disruptive behavior ruins both. Don't put up with it.



Don't put up with dishonesty. Stealing can sometimes be subtle—selling unneeded work on a car is an example. If the tech says it needs brakes when it doesn't, he's stealing from both you and your customer.

Don't put up with careless work or super short cuts. If the tech says they flushed the brake fluid when they didn't, this can't be tolerated.

Don't put up with unsafe workers or those who are "accident-prone". A worker who's overly prone to accidents will eventually hurt themselves on the job and sue you for more than you've got. Don't put up with it.

Don't put up with failure to show for work without calling in or with excessive absenteeism. Some workers frequently wake up with a severe eye problem—they just can't see coming to work that day.

Fish or Cut Bait

When you have a worker who really needs some serious correction, as in the examples above, here are the steps you should take.

First, you have a verbal warning or reprimand. This is best done in the worker's own work area—their turf. Use the reprimand outline previously discussed. (page 7)

As soon as it's over, go to your cubbyhole and write down a brief description of the discussion, date it and put it in the employee's file.

Each verbal reprimand or discussion should be written up and filed. This is doing your homework to avoid legal action by the employee if it comes to that.

If you have serious behavioral issues and have given several verbal warnings without results, it's time for a written warning. There's a good warning form in the back of this book that you can use.

The written warning should clearly address specific behavior, not generalities. It should state the behavior, refer to the dates and times of previous verbal warnings and state that those verbal warnings have not remedied the behavior.

It should also state that further behavior of this type will not be tolerated and may result in termination if not corrected.

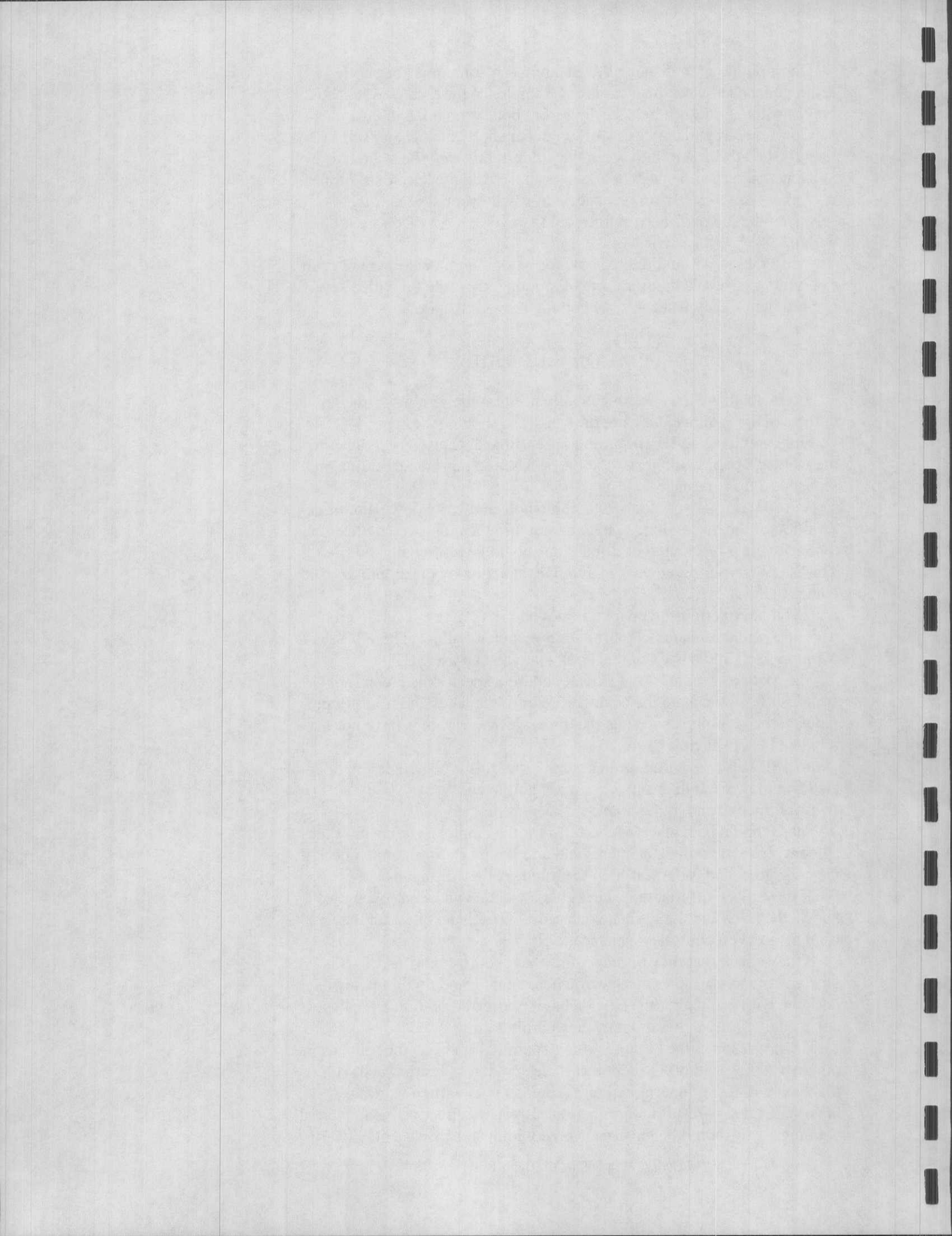
Brief, factual and to the point.

There should be a place on the form for the employee to check if they agree with the warning statements and another place for them to check if they disagree, and room for them to write *why* they disagree.

If they check off that they agree, it's all settled and everyone now knows the rules and the ultimate outcome. There's no question they've been given every reasonable chance to fix it.

If they check that they disagree, they have to give reasons. This is why you always want to cite specific behavior. The only thing they can disagree with is whether the cited behavior occurred or didn't. Excuses don't cut it. They either did it or they didn't do it.

The last resort is the "Final Written Warning". This is the same as the other written warning(s) except that it clearly states "Further behavior of this type will result in termination". The previous written warning(s) have stated it *may* result in termination. If you've already given 2 verbal warnings, you should be legally covered with just the first written warn-



ing. The final written warning makes it indisputable. The worker has been given every reasonable chance to change and the outcome is not in doubt.

The final written warning should be presented in front of a witness. The witness can be your senior manager, any worker or an outside third party. The witness can't say a word, they're only there as a witness.

This seals your legal case if it comes to that. Actually, if you do all this and still have to let the worker go, they'll hopefully understand the deck is stacked so heavily in your favor, legal action won't even be pursued. Don't do this if you're not prepared to fire the worker. The worst thing you can do is threaten them then not follow through.

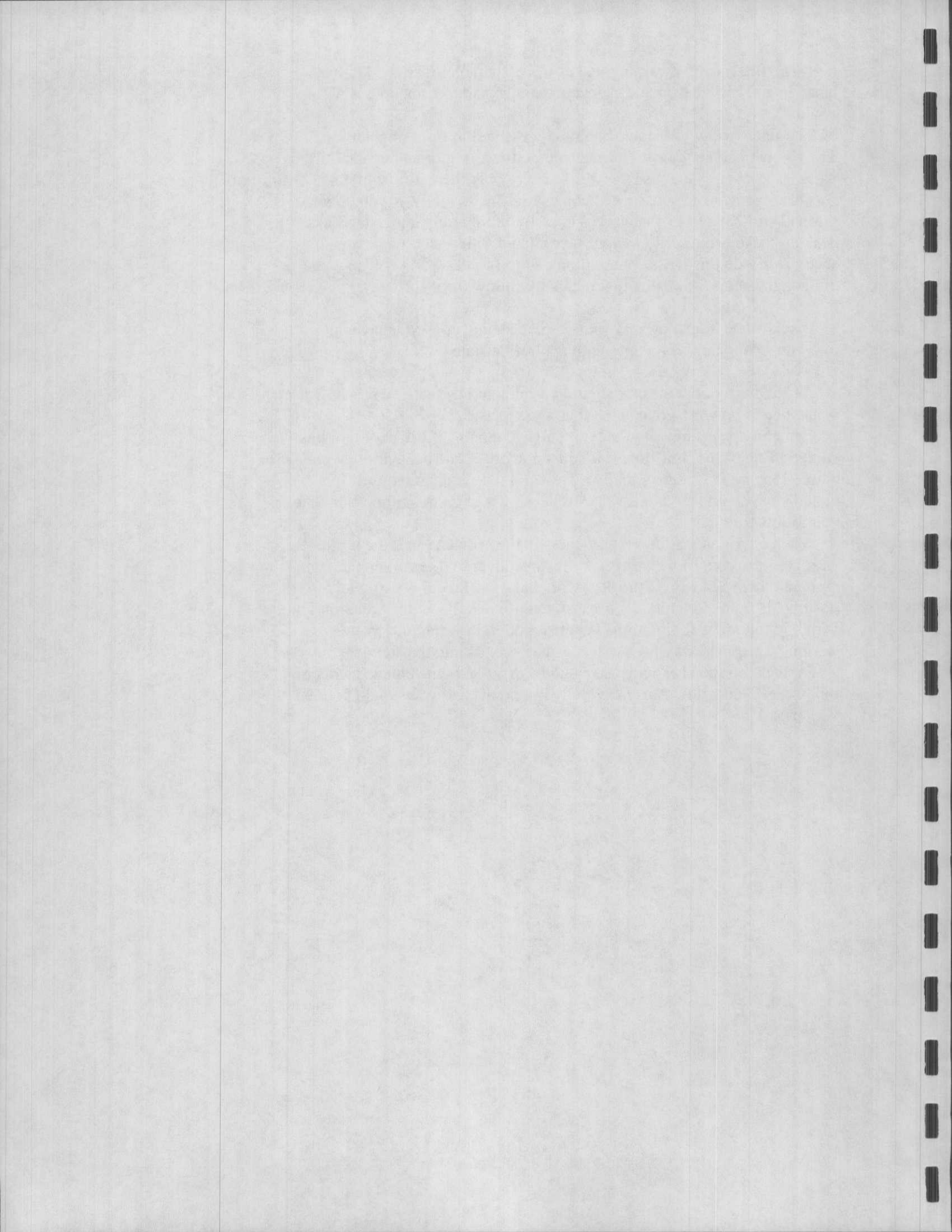
Disclaimer: State laws may vary. You should consult legal counsel to be sure your actions comply with applicable state law.

As always, your demeanor should be calm and factual. Here's how it is and here's how it's gonna be. That's the facts, Jack.

Generally, warnings should expire after 6 months **if the problem has stayed "fixed" for that time.** It's just not fair to cite behavior that occurred long ago. If there's really a problem, it will manifest itself frequently and should be addressed as it does. It's extremely important that you follow through.

When a written warning really does fix the problem, pull the written warning forms out of the worker's file, take them to the worker and congratulate them heartily on the behavior change. Make this extremely positive, it's a real victory for both of you. Finish the victory celebration with both of you walking to the paper shredder, inserting the written warning forms and waving bye-bye as it descends into the shredder.

Pat them on the back and shake hands. You've both achieved a major milestone. This will score some really big points and you should both be very proud.



Team Building and Empowerment

Let Your Team Build Itself

After holding meetings around Ken Blanchard's book, "The One Minute Manager", buy another of his books, "Gung Ho".

This book is about a company with many factories. Their worst one is most likely going to be closed. They want to show they're a progressive company, so they appoint a woman to manage this factory, knowing she can't possibly succeed. They set her up to fail, while keeping their "progressive" company image intact.

Upon arrival at the factory, she finds an impossible job and one ray of sunshine. One department is operating superbly, managed by a Native American.

It's a book about teamwork. Everyone on your staff should be given a copy. This is perfect shop meeting material. Like the previous book, schedule a meeting to discuss pages __ through __. Like every Ken Blanchard book, it's an easy read and can be finished in only a few hours or less.

This will help the workers build their own team around the book. They'll choose their own core values. When they do this, the values are really theirs, not something you pushed onto them. They'll own them. This is of utmost importance.

Picking Your Team—The Job Interview

This is one of the most difficult skills to master. I've done plenty of these interviews wrong, as evidenced by some of the bad hiring decisions I've made through the years (they say you learn from your mistakes—I must be a genius!).

The best way to predict future behavior is to examine past behavior. Therefore, never ask hypothetical questions. They call for conjecture and everyone always promises they'll do the right thing.

Ask them about past performance. I've had good luck with just getting them to talk about anything and everything. The idea is to get them comfortable enough to reveal themselves.

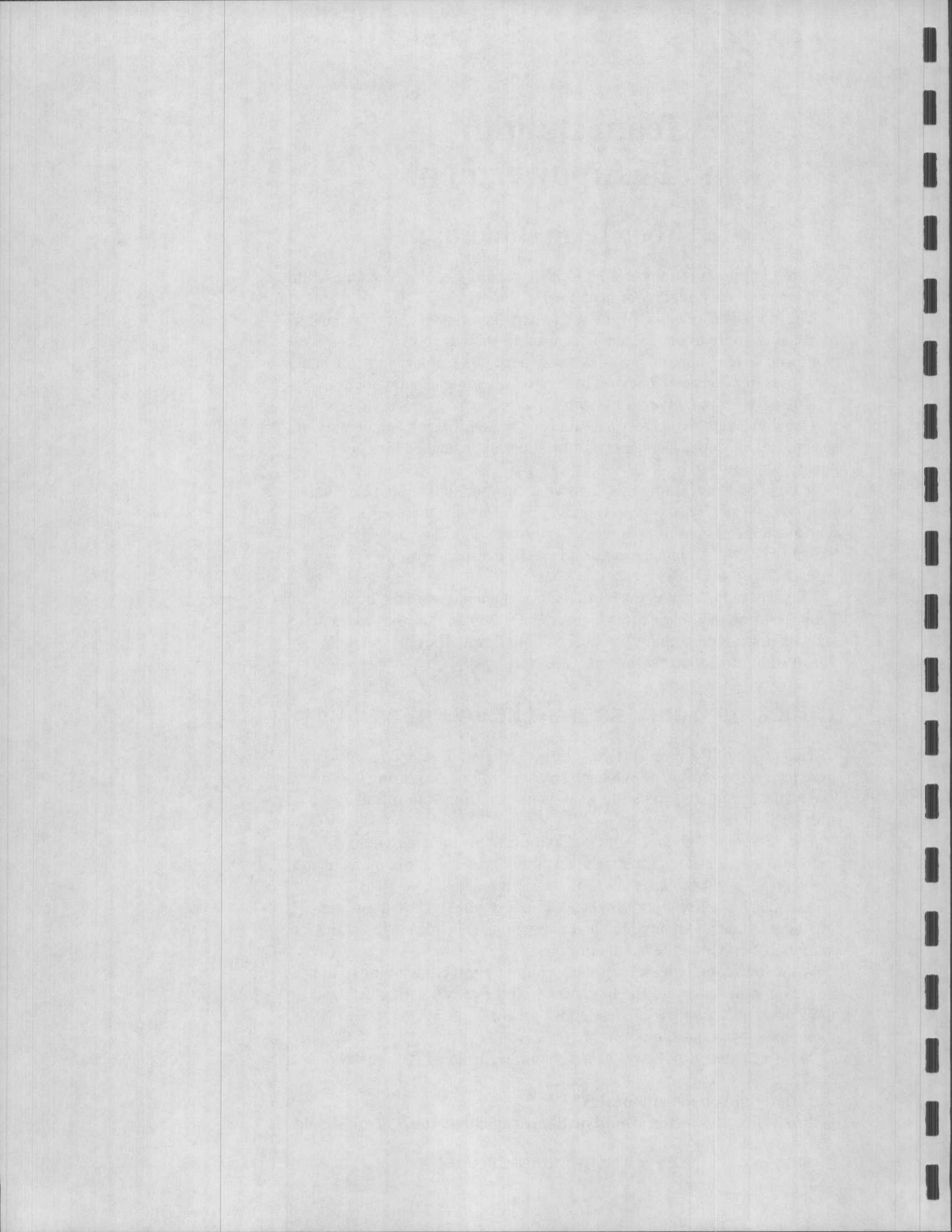
What you're really looking for are examples of them winning in the past, their attitude toward training, how well they work with others and how important customer satisfaction is to them.

Sample power questions:

"You've listed Rex Carrs as a personal reference. Tell me about Rex".

"What did you like about Rex?"

"If I called Rex, what would he likely say about you?" (you should



ask this same question for past employers, too).

“What hobbies do you have?”

“What do you like best about doing that?”

“What do you consider to be some of your best accomplishments?”

“Why did you leave that job?” (this should be asked about each job). If the reason was something they should have seen during their first job interview, ask them about that. I once had a tech tell me he left a job because they didn't have an exhaust system—why would he *take* that job? Couldn't he see they didn't have one when he applied? This indicates they're not telling you the real reason they left.

If it was the old “personality conflict”, ask them to be specific about the conflicts. If they have a lot of these and they're all similar, this may indicate *they* are the one with the personality that conflicts.

“How many days of work did you miss last year?” **“The year before?”**. This tells you about attendance. If they have kids, ask about the kids' health. This also will give you a clue about attendance (or lack thereof).

Always use open-ended questions that encourage the applicant to talk at some length.

Additional power phrases that get people to open up more:

“That's interesting, tell me more”.

“Do you tend to be a person with good luck or bad luck?”. If their life seems to be one tragedy after another, not much will change, except the tragedies will now occur at your shop. I've got a little bit of a soft heart at times and some people just seem to need someone to give them a break. Of all those to whom I've “given a break”, it generally seems that I'm the one who ends up needing the break—from them! Remember, you're running a business, not a rehab farm.

This is all about recruiting potential winners to your shop. Find a potential winner and train them to be a champion. A coach isn't much better than his players. Try to find those who excel.

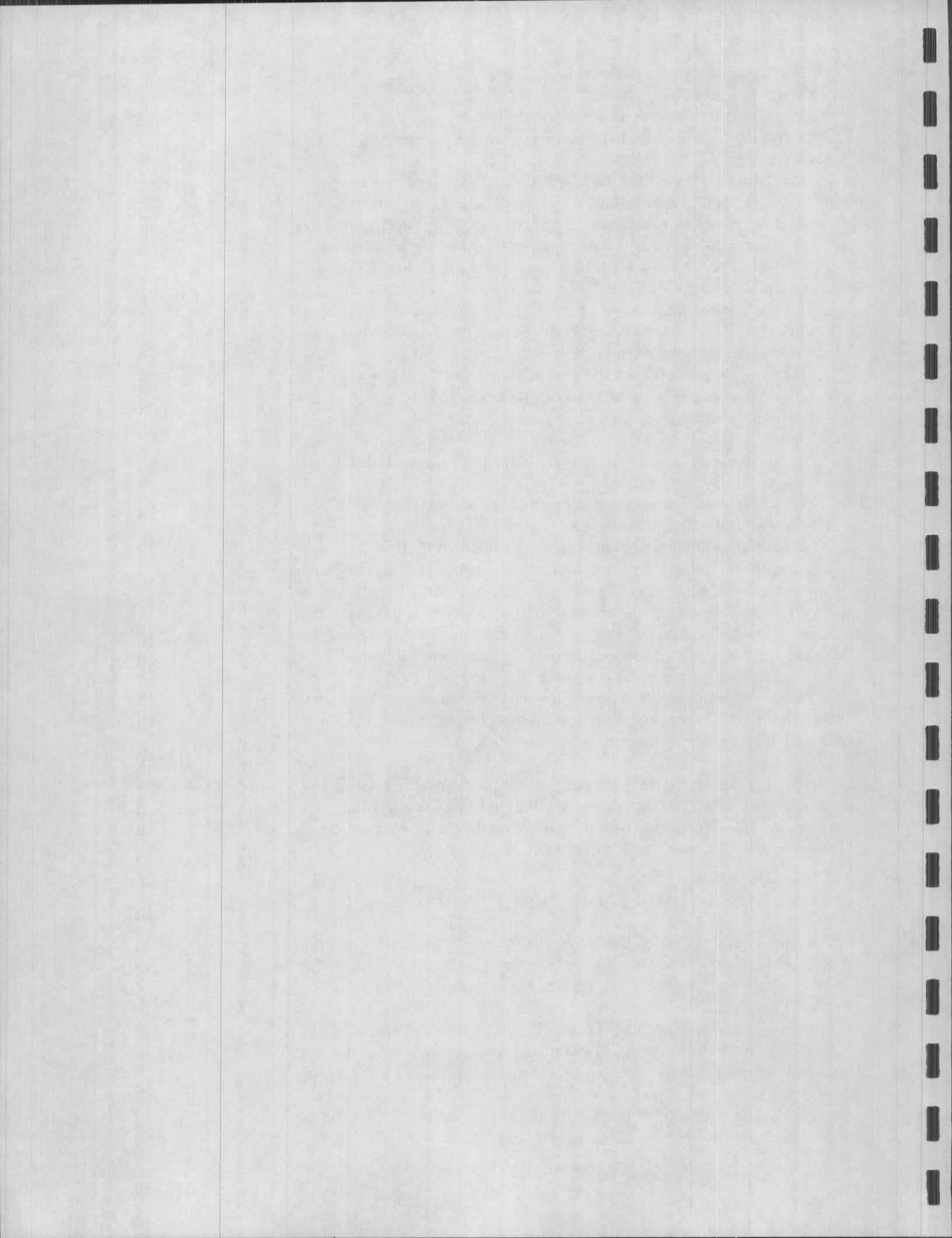
DISCLAIMER: Always consult your legal counsel regarding interview questions. It's unbelievable what you can't ask in some states. As an example, you may *not* ask the applicant if they're married. You *may* say, “Tell me about your family”.

Say Goodbye to Dad

It's been called by many the “Dad” syndrome. Your people are afraid to make a decision. They don't want to get into trouble if they make the wrong one. So, they have to ask Dad about everything. In this case, you're Dad.

The worst thing you can do is encourage this behavior. The only thing badder than this is to put them on hold forever while you think about it. If you can't give them a quick decision, you are now the reason they can't complete the task.

This is a difficult situation to overcome, since it involves changing your own habits (remember the little oil change reminder?).



The best way to handle this is to reward your people for good decisions. This takes some training and positive reinforcement when they do get it right.

When you're asked a Dad question, don't offer a solution. Ask them what they think is the right way to go. They'll most often give you the right answer and then you can tell them how smart they are. **The hard part is for you to give up the instant reflex to just answer the question quickly.**

Always try to answer their question with the question, "What do you suggest?"

If they don't get it right, don't tell them it's wrong. Ask them, "What about.....?" and bring up another angle to the situation that will cause them to think a moment. Then when they get it right, you can again tell them that's a good way to do it. Nice job.

There are naturally times when they won't make the right decision. How you respond is the key to continued development. **Never overrule** a decision made in good faith by an employee. Let them know you'll stand behind them in this process and suggest how it might be done differently next time. Finish by congratulating them on making a decision. Even if they decide to wait and ask you, that's a decision in itself. Encourage them to continue making decisions on their own.

After getting good, consistent reinforcement and positive feedback from you, they can gradually become comfortable with their decisions and you can say goodbye to Dad.

Dippers and Buckets

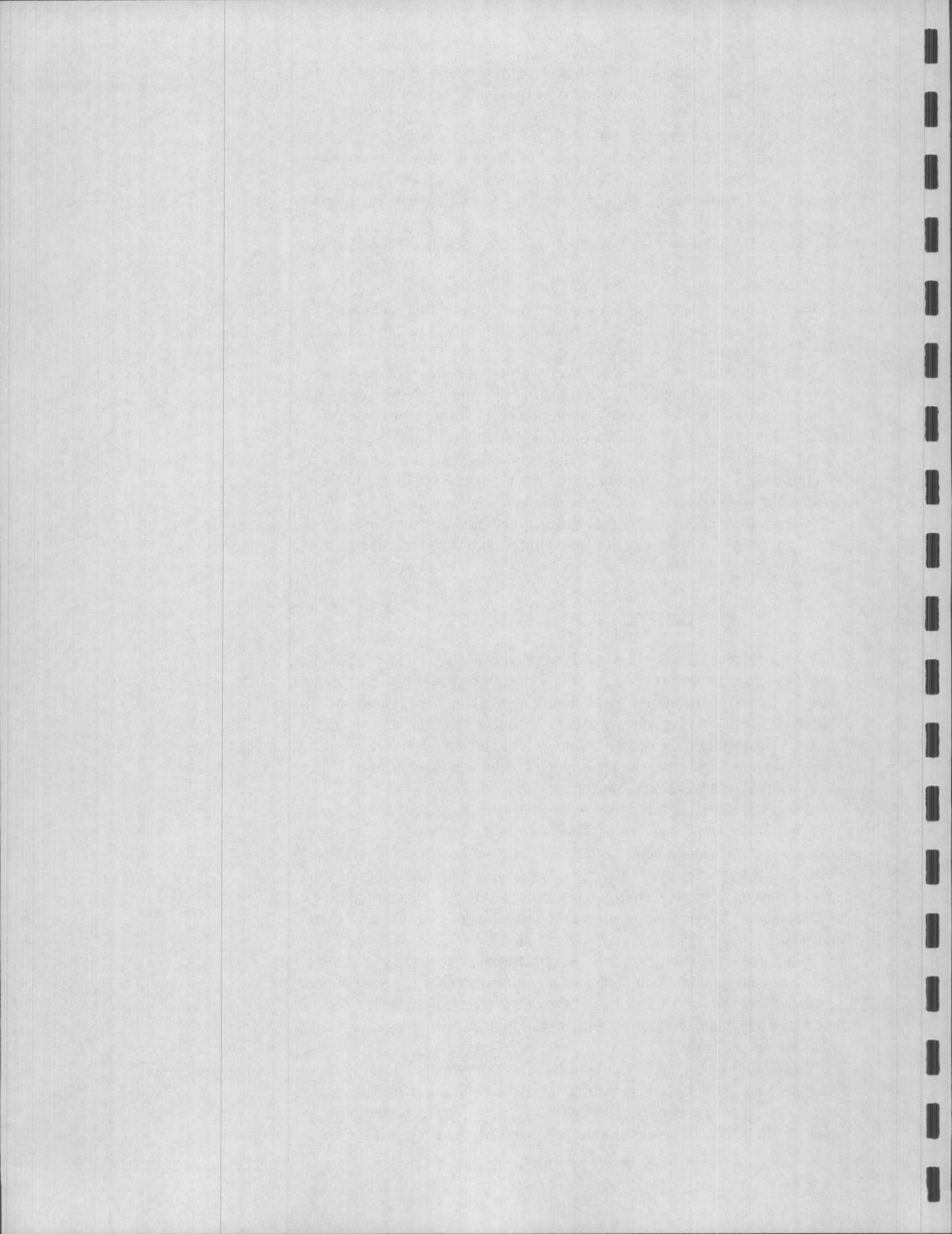
I think I was 15 years old when I attended a YMCA Leadership camp and heard a speaker who had a profound impact on my life. The speaker was Dr. Donald Clifton. He was teaching at the University of Nebraska and would later start a company called Selection Research, Inc. (SRI).

Dr. Clifton taught us all about dippers and buckets. He said everyone carries with them a bucket and a dipper. The bucket is magical and doesn't work like a conventional bucket.

When you say something nice to another person, you take your dipper and dip a little out of your bucket and put it in the other person's bucket. That person feels much better as a result because their bucket is a little fuller. However, the act of dipping out of your bucket doesn't give you less in your bucket, you actually have more as a result. That's the magic of the bucket. You can only increase the contents of your bucket by dipping out.

When you encounter a negative or unpleasant person, they get their dipper in your bucket. You have less in your bucket because they dipped some out, but they don't understand they've also lost from their own bucket. They can never increase their own bucket by dipping from other's buckets.

You should set a goal of trying to increase everyone's bucket who encounters you. This includes customers, workers, family members and anyone else you come into contact with. There's nothing better in life than a full bucket. People seek out those who fill their buckets. It's only



natural to be attracted to people with a full bucket. They make you feel good. When you feel good, you accomplish great things and do your best work.

I never hesitate to tell my customers they look great when they do. I always go out of my way to compliment the customer who's doing a great job of maintaining their car. I want them to feel good about maintaining it, they increase my income when they do.

I also want my workers to feel good about coming to work. I greet each one cheerfully in the morning. I'm at the door with my bucket and dipper, just waiting to fill their buckets to the brim as often as I can.

Dr. Clifton went on to become quite successful with SRI and finally bought out his biggest competitor. I'm certain you've heard of that company—SRI Gallup. Yes, the Gallup organization is owned by Don Clifton, the master dipper. It currently employs over a thousand people.

Nice job, Don.

Not too long ago, I was visiting with a customer who worked at SRI and knew Don. I mentioned I'd always remembered the bucket story and frequently repeated it to others. She told me that every worker at SRI has a little bucket on their desk.

Recently, I got an unusual package from SRI. It was an advance copy of Don's last book, written as he was dying. It's entitled "How Full is Your Bucket? Positive Strategies for Work and Life". I was very moved by this gesture.

It hit the bookshelves August 11, 2004 and is highly recommended reading.

Keep dipping those dippers and filling those buckets.

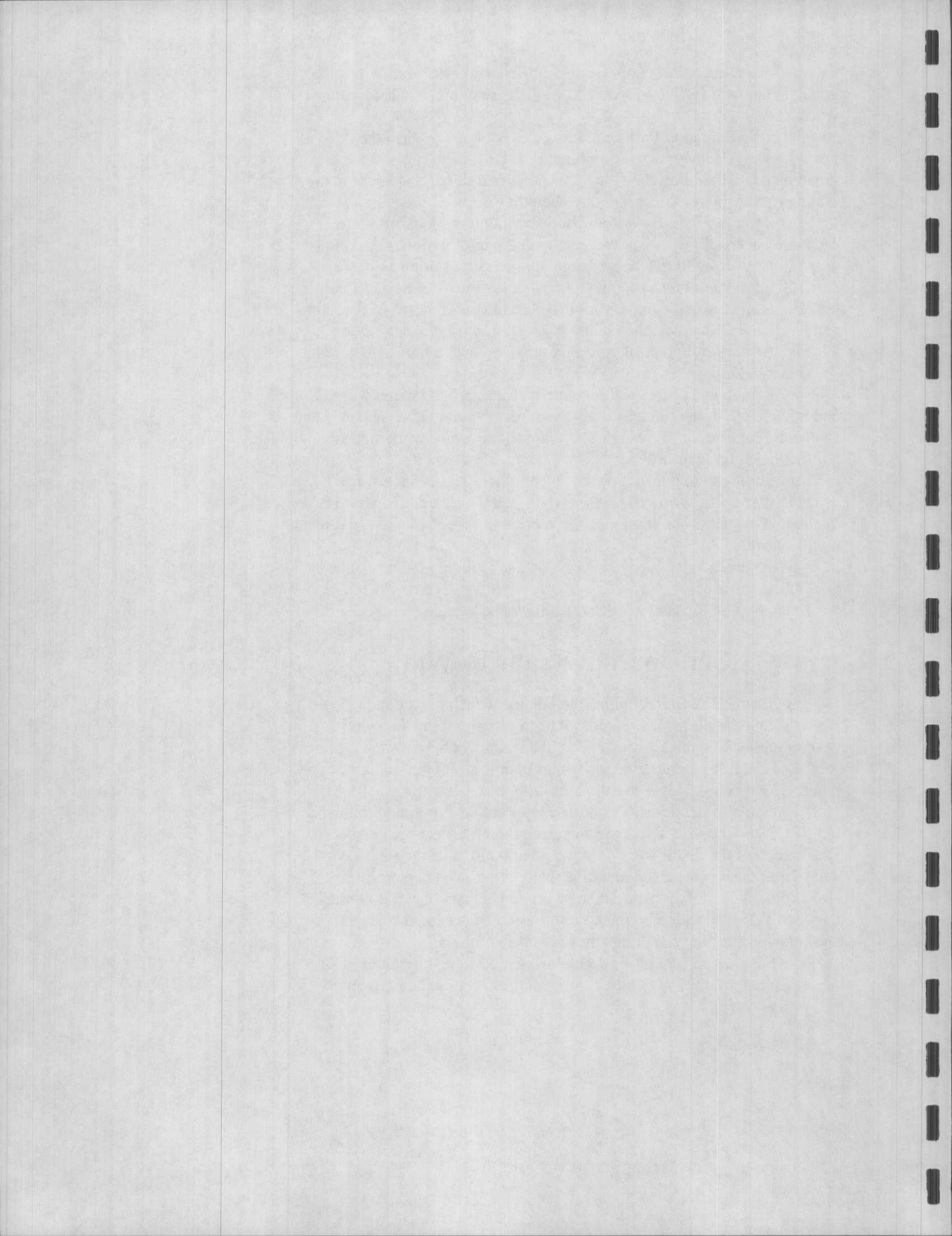
Set Up Your Team To Win

A good coach has to recognize the talents of each player and design plays around the player's strengths. The tasks of running a service business should be assigned in such a way that each worker does the types of jobs they excel at. Generally, good sales people aren't very detail oriented. Good detail people usually aren't good at sales.

If you have someone who's good at sales but has trouble with the detail part of the job, see if you can re-assign those tasks to the person who's good at the detail work. On the other hand, take the sales tasks away from the detail person and give them to the sales person.

Nothing is more frustrating than trying to get someone to do things they don't do well. Ideally, the system should be designed so each worker is performing the things they are each strong at.

Take this into consideration when hiring a new crew member. Don't hire too many of one type. Hire to complement your existing workers.



George's Top Ten Things You Can Do To Mess Up as a Manager

10. Rent the movie "9 to 5" and imitate Dabney Coleman.

Ignore the good things they do right and nit-pick on all the little insignificant things they do wrong. Be sure to reprimand the worker who's a few minutes late, even if they've been on time for several months straight. They'll soon forget who's boss unless you constantly remind them. Using phrases like, "company policy", "my way or the highway" and the famous, "I may not always be right, but I'm always the boss" are phrases sure to win their hearts. Better yet, put up a lot of signs.

9. Don't send anyone to training—after all, they're just going to quit and go somewhere else. There's no point in training another company's workers.

Training makes them better workers. You should send all of them to training as often as possible. Zig Ziglar once said, "The only thing worse than training people and watching them leave is *not training them* and having them all stay". There's such a thing as having too little turnover. If you've done a good job of hiring and training winners, it's only natural they'll want to grow and progress. Support those who seek to better themselves. They'll only better your company while they're with you.

8. Be sure your workers realize they're just an expense to be minimized.

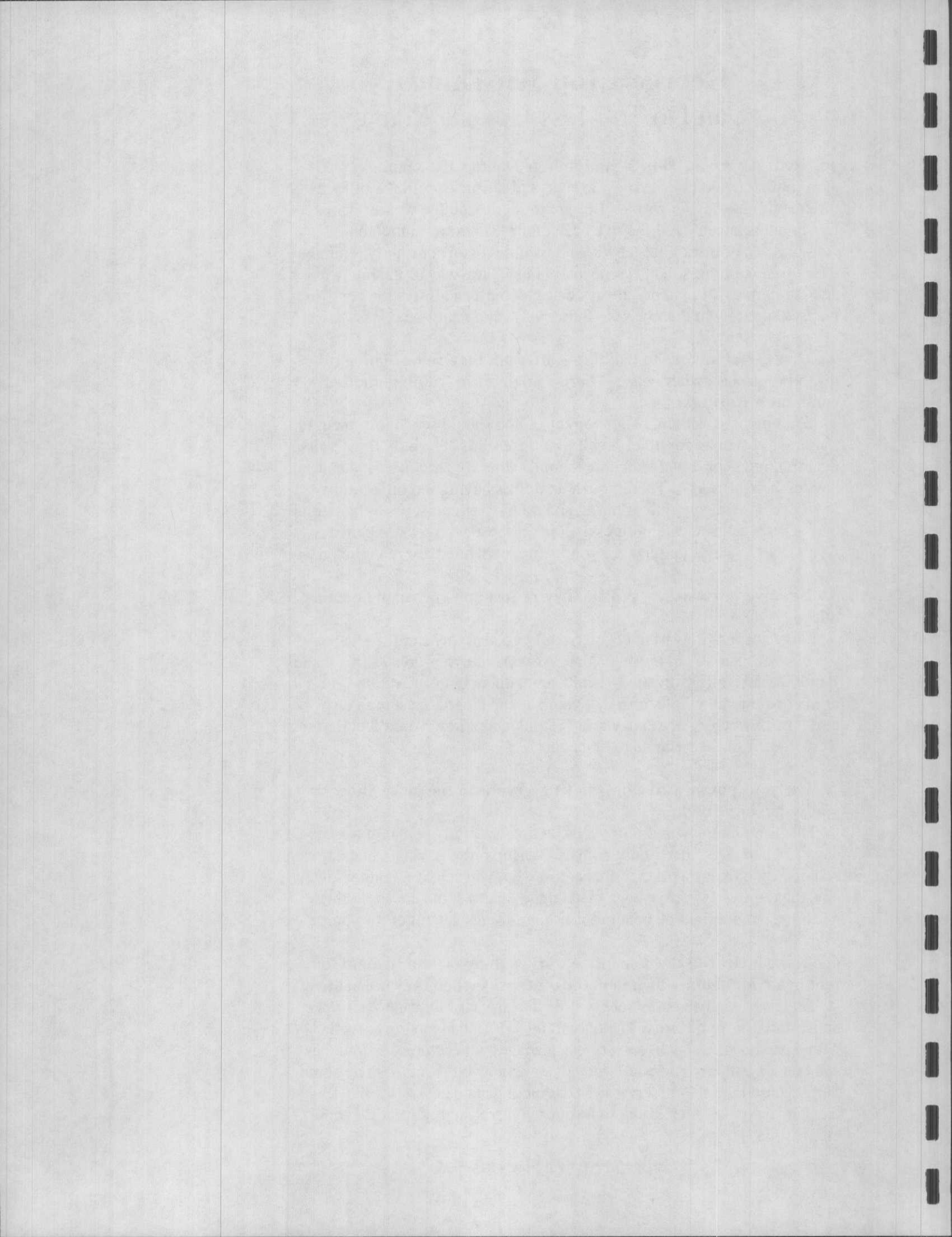
Large corporations have become really good at this and it's one reason a lot of them are in trouble. Your workers are your greatest asset and should be carefully cultivated. Don't screw them out of vacation. If a normal paid holiday falls on a day your shop is closed, be sure to also close the day before or the day after. Think about how you'd feel if you were in their place (been there, done that).

7. Use your power as the boss to let everyone in the place know you're having a bad day.

This is about the worst thing you can do. Naturally, we all have good days and bad days, that's only human. When you're having a bad day, take it easy on your workers. Be careful what you say, it might be low down and ugly. If you've been meaning to talk to someone about their performance, it might be better to wait until things get better for you.

6. Make it clear to the disruptive worker that you won't stand for that behavior again—then look the other way when they misbehave.

This is basically a battle for control. The 3-year-old wants to run the house and it's *your house*. The only thing worse than having to work with a person who acts like a jerk is a manager who actually encourages and condones their actions. If you tell someone you won't tolerate something, you'd better not tolerate it. Act quickly and decisively when this happens. You're either going to fix it or you aren't. Fix it or live to regret it.



5. Mess around with people's paychecks.

Be very careful when you figure pay plans. Once you've given something, it's nearly impossible to "take it back". Make sure your pay calculations are correct before you award them.

Be sure to pay on time, even if you're out of town. "Estimated" checks can be issued if you're not going to be around. It's not that hard to take an average of their last 3 checks for an estimated check. All the math can be corrected on the next check and the figures clearly shown.

Make sure the checks will clear the bank. If the bank makes a mistake, get a letter from the bank to show your workers. On one occasion, my bank mistakenly credited a large company deposit to my *personal* account, which meant the payroll checks wouldn't clear on pay day. YIKES!! The money really *was* in the bank, it was just in the wrong account... The bank verified my story, but there were some anxious moments for a while. Any worker's loyalty to the company is only as good as the worker's ability to pay their rent.

4. When Frankie tries to help you out by informing you of the misdeeds of Louie, be sure Louie knows "who fingered him" by telling Louie, "Frankie said...."

A good manager discovers a way to "find out on his own". Never indict a good worker who's only trying to help you out with good information. If you do, you'll never get good information again.

It isn't that hard to "discover" a worker misbehaving if you already know what they're doing. Protect your sources.

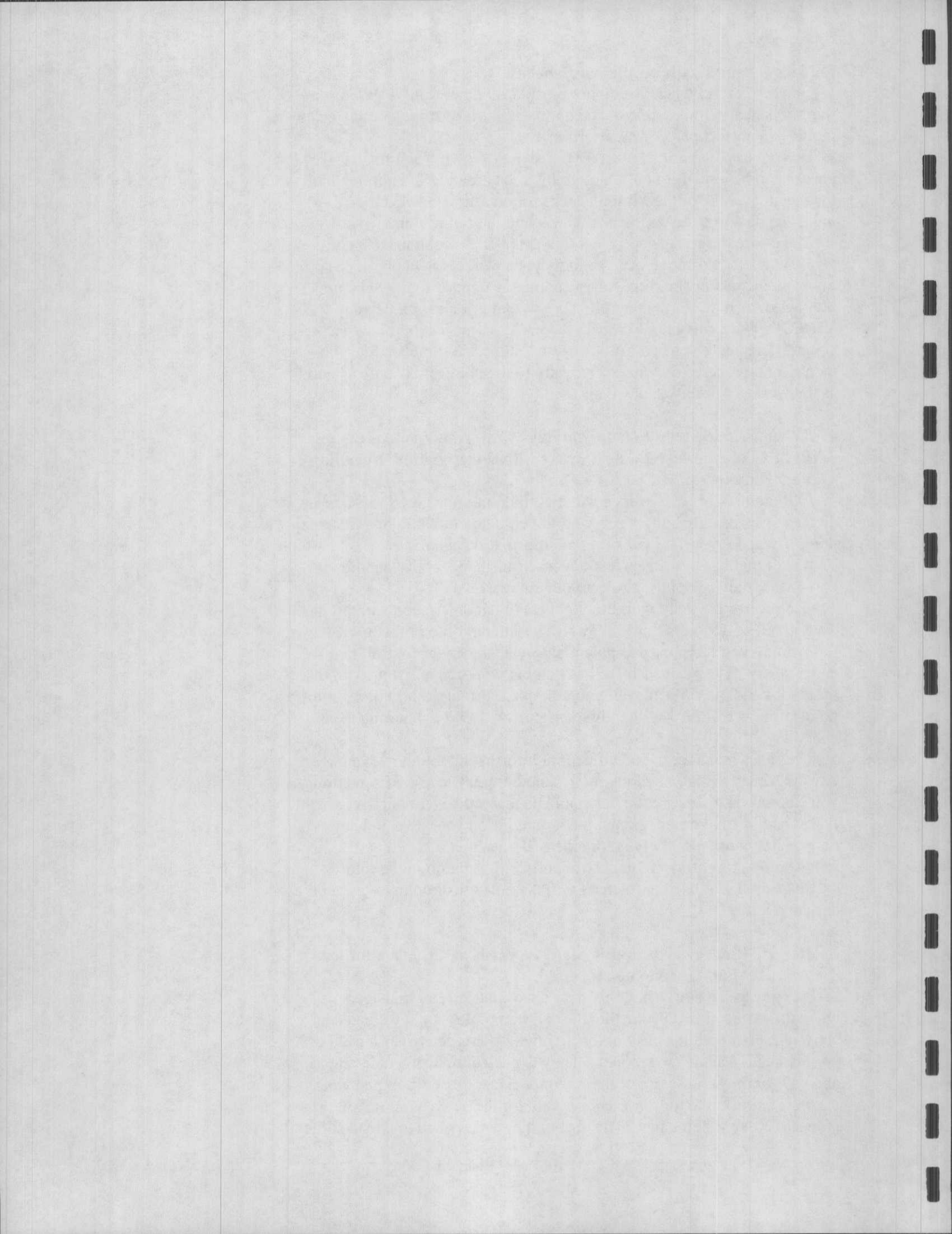
Occasionally, a good worker will "vent" to another good worker. They'll tell co-workers things they'd never dream of telling you. If they told you, it would represent a potential threat, since you control their job and security. They can easily tell a friend at work the real things on their mind. It's the old, "Yeah, well you tell *him*...." thing. Third party communication is real. It's not really the right way to do it, but it happens every day.

The smart manager uses confidential information to their advantage. A worker may actually be looking for another job because of something you can fix. Humans are the only animals that are never really satisfied. If you **can** fix the reason, come up with the fix on your own and announce it at work. Publicly ignore the real reason you're doing it. This will insure you continue to get confidential information in the future.

Bosses who violate confidences will become mushrooms—kept in the dark and fed BS.

3. Be sure that rewards aren't really rewards at all, just another dreary task that's sure to be regretted.

One guy told a story about his wife's workplace. Her managers decided they needed to do something to "raise morale" so they created an activity each month for the workers to attend. This activity occurred off premises and usually cost money. They expected the workers to attend and pay for the activity out of their own pockets. In addition, the workers were expected to turn in *vacation time* for the activity, so it wouldn't reduce their take-home pay. This meant the workers had to attend some-



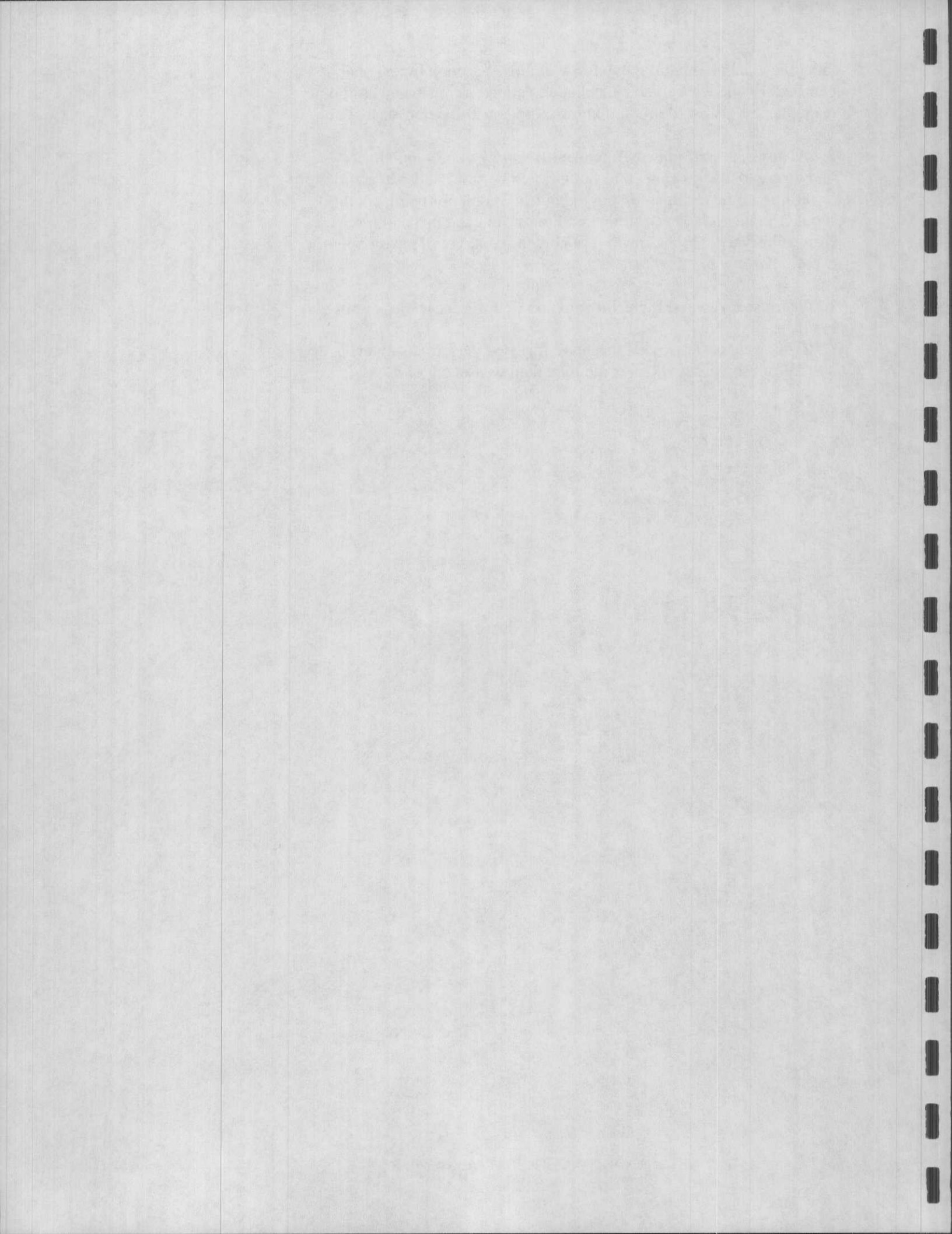
thing they had no input on, pay for it *and* lose vacation time. Wait, it gets better—the workers who declined to attend were labeled as “not a team player”. Wow, don’t you know morale just soared over that one?

2. Always reward poor behavior and *punish* good behavior.

Be sure to always cave in to Louie when he acts badly. In addition to rewarding Louie for this, be sure to punish Frankie for being good. It shouldn’t take too long to straighten Frankie out and make him see the error of his ways. Frankie will probably quit, but you’ll have Louie forever...

1. Promise a reward for achievements then figure a way out of giving it.

If you want to destroy all incentive for good performance, this is the best. Promise your workers something then weasel out of it.



Recommended Reading

The One Minute Manager
by Ken Blanchard

Gung Ho
by Ken Blanchard

How Full Is Your Bucket?
Positive Strategies for Work and Life
by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton

All three of these books are very short and easy to read. They take complex concepts and make them easy to execute.

Ken Blanchard has written a lot of books and each one is excellent. If you like these three, go on to read another of his books, "The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey". Yes, it's really a book...

Written Warning

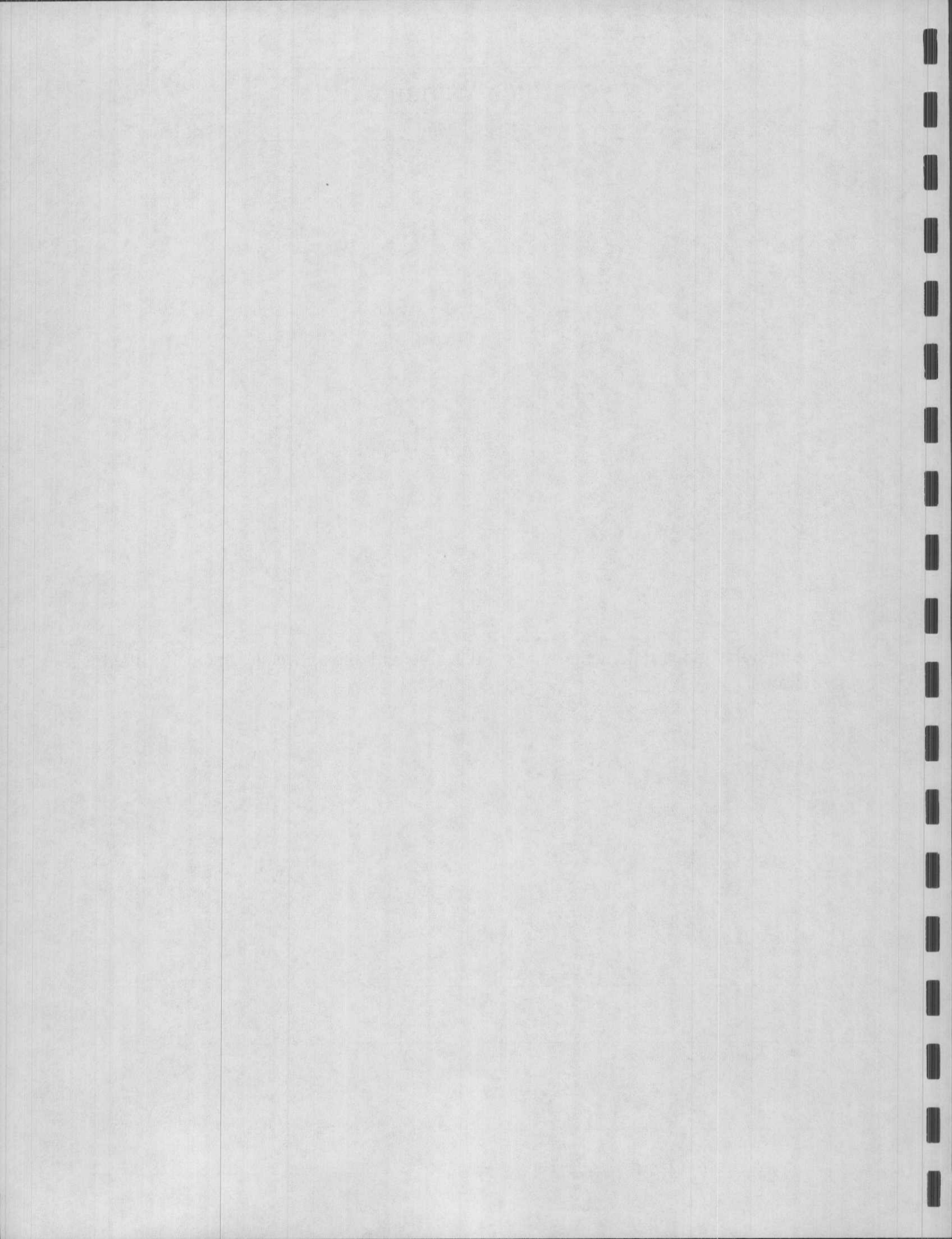
Employee Name _____ Date __/__/__ _____ Written warning:

I agree with the above statements. I disagree with the above statements for the following reasons:

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Employee

Witness





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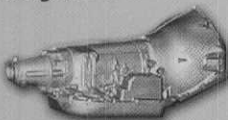
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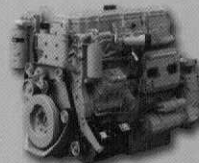


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