

## **A strong team + a strong staff morale = A strong business**

**Erin Allen, Succeed Consultancy**



Childcare Sales Australia is proud to publish yet another article from our regular columnists Erin Allen of Succeed Consultancy. Erin begins a new journey of articles on staffing. The first article in this series; A strong teams + a strong staff morale = a strong business looks at the fundamentals of a Centre the staff.

As usual it is sound practical information for owner operators, investors and new buyers alike. You can contact Erin Allen on the numbers provided below or visit the Succeed Consultancy website for more information at:

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The old adage “your business is only as good as your staff” is so true. However owners forget the remainder of the saying. “staff are only as good as their managers”. I hear too frequently “my staff, they don’t do, they, they, they”. Staff are my only headache, if I didn’t have staff I wouldn’t have any problems”. Sounding familiar...

### ***Importance of our Staff***

Staff are the basis to our business, without their commitment, dedication and professionalism you wouldn’t have a business. Staff are the ones that make your business what it is; good, bad or indifferent. Managers make the staff what they are; good, bad or indifferent. ***What do your staff say about you? Are you a good, bad or indifferent Manager?***

Your staff are the ones welcoming families and children, they know the children in their care intimately in respect to their personalities, routines, likes and dislikes. Your staff are the ones that build two way reciprocal relationships with your families. They are the ones that slog away at ensuring Licensing and Accreditation standards are met day in and day out, they like you put in the extra hours out of work time to ensure their programs and children’s portfolios are up to date. Do you notice your staff’s efforts?

Caring by their nature are the staff in Early Childhood. They are the ones that will stay back 15 minutes every night for that one family who doesn’t own a watch, clock, alarm or a phone with the time on it, the ones that can never make it by 6.00pm to collect their child. Your staff are the ones that get vomited on, pooped on, kissed on so lovingly and sloppily, dribbled on and yes snotted on. Do they ever complain? No they put their aprons on, wash their hands, place their gloves on, wash their hands and wash their hands again and again until their skin is nearly falling off. To your staff; it’s just another

wondrous fun filled exciting day that is never the same. That's why they are in childcare because they are passionate about high quality care.

We all agree that staff are in child care because they are passionate about it. We also agree that it's not for the pay. However passion doesn't always remain if their work environment is not conducive to their professional needs.

### ***Fostering a Strong Team***

Is your team strong? Have you a clear recruitment, induction and appraisal system in place? Your recruitment, induction and appraisal systems are the core components to a strong team. These three areas are the foundation for communicating your Centres philosophy, policies and procedures; the Centre expectations!

Recruitment allows you to choose suitable applicants that reflect the core values of your team, your Centre's philosophy and policies. Induction is an avenue to set the expectations, time is given for two way feedback, reflection and confirmation in the Centre's core values and practice. Appraisals allow for the opportunity to review and reflect both on the staff members and the Centre's performance using the Centres philosophy and policies as a basis for this reflection. Appraisals are also a reflective tool to monitor and assess training needs and staff's professional goals.



### ***Staff Morale***

Once the basis of a strong team is in place, it is imperative that staff morale remains a key focus for Centre Management, a happy and content team results in a happy and content Centre.

As an Early Childhood Teacher we are taught to build a child's self esteem we must foster acceptance, tolerance, love, empathy, set clear consistent limits, offer praise, offer encouragement, clear expectations, set up environments that are challenging but not to the point of failure, have simple rules, use visual aids as reminders, use positive language, provide open ended learning.

As simple as our foundations are; for high self esteem and a positive sense of self for our children in our care. These same foundations apply to our team. With limits, encouragement, clear expectations, praise, acceptance and tolerance being offered in a consistent approach to all of the team, the team will flourish through the provision of a fair and just approach.

Blaming staff for what they did or didn't do doesn't solve that the problem occurred in the first place. To be an effective manager, the most effective strategy is to ask yourself "why" this issued occurred and "how" can I manage it more effectively in the future to

ensure it doesn't happen again. Talk openly and honestly to the staff, ask for suggestions from the staff, don't blame, yell or accuse. Manage the problem.

My speech to any new client or new Director is "treat your staff as your own group of children, take the core values from the foundations in building a strong self esteem in children; offer your staff encouragement, consistent limits, praise, clear expectations and most importantly RESPECT"

It all comes back to just one little word RESPECT, offering staff respect results in a strong team which results in strong staff morale.

### ***Morale Building Strategies***

A little exercise tomorrow or when you are at your Centre next ask the staff what the most important moral boost for them is. I assure you that their first response is a payrise in a jovial manner, the second response will be on a more serious note and 90% percent of your staff will say verbal appreciation and to be verbally noticed on the good things they do. Go on try it, email me if you get anything different...

Listen to your staff first and foremost; moral building is not about you impressing them with expensive trips, gifts or dinners. It's about you walking in your Centre and acknowledging what they do every day is good and most of all you notice and acknowledge them. They want to hear that you notice the good work they do for you. Clare wants you to acknowledge how she prevented little Jo being bitten from her fantastic behaviour management strategies, Martha wants you to notice how she has changed the children's environment into effective learning Centres, Kelly wants you to notice she has updated the birthday chart from those old clowns that have been up there for the last 5 years. Verbal praise, verbal praise and a bit more verbal praise. If you don't do anything else start taking notice and acknowledge your staff verbally.

### ***Other Moral Boosting Strategies***

- **Verbal thankyou's for a job well done**
- **Verbal acknowledgement of positive work attitude, performance, initiative, commitment and professionalism one on one, in small group situations in informal and formal situations.**
- Post it notes messages left in staff areas, such as work stations in the rooms, on/in lockers, on their lunch.
- Public acknowledgement walls either in the staff room or foyer for colleagues and parents to add positive comments (don't forget the pen).
- Staff newsletters on a regular basis.
- Staff member of the month voted by colleagues and parents.
- Remember their birthdays, a card, flowers, a voucher or a gift.
- Surprise lunches from time to time.
- A nice email to say thankyou.
- Regular staff appraisals twice per year and don't forget to go back to the previous one.
- Program evaluations regularly with written feedback.
- Centre budgets.
- Regular maintenance and cleaning.
- A warm and cosy staff room.

- Staff amenities e.g. microwaves, fridges, coffee, morning teas.
- Supply water in the staff room.
- The list is endless; ask your staff for further ideas via suggestion boxes, surveys, staff meetings etc. **They know what they want.**

**REMEMBER : You Grow What you Sow**

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Proudly brought to you my industry expert Erin Allen form **Succeed Consultancy**.

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### **What We offer in Terms of Contracts**

#### **Long Term Management**

Entails a minimum of a twelve month contract covering all operational Requirements. Long Term Management packages are tailored to suit your Centres specific needs and individuality. Together we work to develop your Management Plan

#### **Short Term Management**

Is available to Services that require assistance for less then a twelve month period, ranging from a month onwards. You may require a focus purely on Accreditation for two months in preparation for validation.

#### **Periodical Management**

Can range from one day to a month. You may require an induction pack, support with a staff issue, self study preparation. What ever you need, every Centre is unique.

### **Who Do We Cater To?**

Directors  
Long Day Care  
Preschools  
Investors  
Private Based Centres  
Community Based Organisations Small and Large  
Council Based Centres  
Management Committee's  
Architects

Co-ordinators  
After School Care  
Family Day Care  
Owner operators  
Assistants  
Group Leaders  
Carer's  
Support Staff