

Container Store Employee Motivation



The Container Store is a role model for applying the key drivers of employee performance in customer service.

It is no accident that the Container Store is a runaway leader in the hypercompetitive retail business. The Dallas-based seller of customized storage products pays attention to several key drivers to ensure that employees provide unflinching customer service. The Container Store begins by carefully selecting job applicants who are conscientious and embrace customer service values. To attract and keep this talent, the company pays 50 percent or more than typical retail salaries and maintains a respectful culture. "We are absolute wild-eyed fanatics when it comes to only hiring great people," says president and CEO Kip Tindell, who cofounded the Container Store with partner and chairman Garrett Boone. "One of our Foundation Principles™ is that one great person is equal to three good people in terms of business productivity."

Once hired, full-time employees receive 241 hours of training during their first year, compared to under a dozen hours for frontline staff at most other retailers. This training provides more than specialized skills and knowledge to analyze customer storage needs. It also teaches fundamental values that encourage employees to go beyond the customer's short-term expectations. "Helping people is an obligation on our part," says Boone. "It's not a religious imperative. It's an ethical imperative to really help that person to the best of your ability."

The Container Store also motivates employees beyond generous pay and benefits. Team members in each store collectively set goals and provide supportive feedback in the daily "huddle." Employees also call in to a special celebration voice mail system to tell stories about co-workers who went above and beyond the call of duty. To create a sense of ownership and involvement, employees receive ongoing information about the company and have a lot of freedom to make decisions. "A funny thing happens when you take the time to educate your

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employees, pay them well, and treat them as equals," says Kip Tindell. "You end up with extremely motivated and enthusiastic people."

Companies can learn from this example, The Container Store applies several key concepts that are the drivers of individual behavior and performance. Employee motivation is supported through rewards and recognition. Selection and training ensure that staff members are able to perform the tasks. The Container Store's strong customer service values provide clear role perceptions to keep employees steered in the right direction. And as Garrett Boone stated, these values also maintain solid ethical standards throughout the company.

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