

## **Setting Aggressive Objectives & Three Levels of Understanding**

**By Mike Stickler**

**Last week I was talking to a group of senior managers at a large manufacturing company when the discussion turned to setting objectives. We ended up initially, with three schools of thought:**

**The first group thought that any objective that the company set should be doable. Their argument was that objectives should be reasonable and achievable with a little focused effort. They felt that this would reinforce an atmosphere of success.**

**The second group thought that any objective that the company set should be a stretch objective...that it should stretch the abilities of the people “somewhat”...their argument was that stretch objectives could be accomplished with extra effort and focus. They felt that this approach would also reinforce an atmosphere of success.**

**The third group had a wild and crazy idea. They thought that any objective that the company set should be an incredibly, aggressive objective. It should appear to be absolutely totally out of reach, impossible. Their argument was that doable or stretch objectives did not really challenge the people, departments, the processes or the company. They also questioned how often do people ever exceed the objective. They felt that doable or mild stretch objectives were a waste of time and effort.**

**I think the third group was on the right track...almost!**

**I suggested and argued for the following...set incredible, obscenely aggressive, and virtually impossible, beyond reach, objectives. Set objectives that forces you to start ACTING in a very different way. It's the ACTING different that leads you to thinking different. It is the thinking in a different way that leads you to most likely finding that breakthrough idea, that idea redefines you, your department, your company and maybe even your industry.**

**The immediate reaction was a very uncomfortable silence. Followed by a burst of enthusiastic rejection, followed by quiet reflection, and then reluctant acceptance of the idea.**

**They had accepted the idea, and intellectually they bought in. However, there is an incredible canyon between intellectually understanding, emotionally understanding and physically doing something different.**

**The real understanding and buy in, only happens when all three levels, intellectually, emotionally and physically are embraced. Intellectual understanding is recognizing that something must change. Emotional understanding is recognizing that you must change. Physical understanding is when you actually do something different, in other words you put the intellectual and emotional understanding into action.**

**When someone challenges your thinking, the conventional wisdoms you have embraced, and teases you with a radical new idea, try understanding on all three levels. It will probably make your brain hurt, your heart skip a beat and physically wear you out. But you will feel so good for having tried.**

**The bottom line...you won't know if the idea has any value until you TRY it.**

**Remember, talking and thinking about it isn't doing it.**

**Doing it is doing it!!!**