

# Starting the New Year with Gratitude

By Mark Samuel

For more than a year now, people in all levels of the organization have been involved in continuous change efforts. Many have been concerned with losing their jobs or changing positions in the organization. Others have been working hard to keep up with increasing demands while their resources have been cut. In other words, people are tired of pushing.

While we can't stop the fast pace and changing environment and still stay competitive, we can acknowledge people for their effort, courage and dedication during the past year. Celebration provides a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge the changing organization and the people who worked very hard to make the change a reality. People need to know that their efforts contributed to the organization and added value during the year. Celebration provides the mechanism for letting people know that they made a difference.

In addition, while you are acknowledging people for their contribution to the new organization and culture, you are also claiming and reinforcing the current state of the organization. This assists people in buying in to the change as opposed to thinking the organization will ultimately revert back to its old ways.

With the serious nature of change and questionable economic times, it's important to keep the celebration light, fun and meaningful at the same time. Celebration can be a party, a picnic, or a special gathering. One of the most effective celebrations I was a part of included the performance of a comedian who made fun of the current state of the workplace. The comedian made sure to emphasize the funny characteristics of the managers in the organization.

Celebration provides people an opportunity to reflect, regenerate themselves and laugh at themselves to make sure that they aren't taking things too seriously. Also, it provides you an opportunity to fine-tune the focus of the organization without appearing that you are dissatisfied or in a punishing mode.

Ultimately, celebration provides you an opportunity to pump new spirit into the organization. It's a time to share appreciations and for people to recommit to their Vision as individuals. It is a time for all individuals to refine their Vision of service, professional excellence, their development as individuals, and for moving to their next levels of accountability.

If celebration is not done, people may begin focusing more on the struggle of working harder without feeling a sense of accomplishment or without seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. They may begin focusing on their lack of compensation to justify their hard work which, in many cases, is a way for people to act out their frustration.

What are the changes that your organization and department have made during the past year? Have you thought about all of the effort and contribution of effort and service that

created those changes? How can you let people know that you appreciated their value during the past year?