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Birthstone: Emerald
Flower: Lily of the Valley

Pathfinder



CITY OF SANTA MARIA EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER



Word has it ...

From your City Manager

Rick Haydon



Spring is here and it's a time for new beginnings. We all understand that every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it, and we all want to look good and excel at what we do. With that in mind, I'm sharing some tips for improvement that I've learned over the years.

To achieve good results requires a mindset – the ideas and attitudes with which you approach a situation. Quality is a mindset. Have you ever seen a team running onto the playing field yelling, “We want to be number two?” Everyone wants to be No. 1. Those who actually achieve it are willing to put in the effort. Remember, you do what you have to do, to do what you want to do!

Practice quality thinking. Get yourself psyched up: see a task as something you are doing for others, not as something being done by you. We are in the public eye and our programs and services are very tangible to a lot of customers.

If a project has a number of tasks, break them down and start with the biggest tasks and break them down into individual steps that have their own deadlines. Do the “veggies” first, you know, the toughest steps, and leave the easiest ones for later. As you schedule individual tasks, give yourself a cushion so you have time to deal with changes or emergencies.

Record ideas as soon as they come to you, by keeping a notebook close at hand. Anything that lets you capture your thoughts will work when you need to recall them. It also helps to write things down so that you can relax

away from work. Those notes will be there when you need them. You will make better decisions if you write down the pros and cons of a line of action. This doesn't take time, it saves time.

For problem solving, have both parties state their problem. Make “I” statements. Acknowledge the other's problem. Let them talk and you listen, and then restate what you've heard. Ask clarifying questions, like why? Why not? What if we did such and such? Wait for answers to your questions. Stay in the present and future and not in the past. Look for areas of agreement.

After “putting out fires” ask yourself after each event, why did it occur, what can be done to prevent its recurrence, and if it does happen again, how can I handle it better? What roadblocks can be removed? Turn problems around. Exploring how you could make a bad situation worse can sometimes tell you what not to do.

Volunteer. Your supervisor may be unaware of your special skill or initiative. Volunteering to become the go-to person for letters, or for proofreading, or for Excel tasks can bring you opportunity. When a manager or supervisor finds undiscovered talent, it can be a win-win. Managers and supervisors should be sure to reward the best ideas and recognize them publicly. This could be nominating the employee for our Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Award (which is expanding to three times per year), and showing appreciation, and noting the contribution in an employee's file.

In closing, always be looking forward. Do not end a meeting without assigning everyone a next step and a deadline. This will help the team focus on the small steps in front of them. It can help divide large projects into small increments that you can accomplish one step at a time.

Rick