

Symmetry

Employee Suggestion Program Proposal

Jake Aull, - July 7, 2008

What is this about?

- I'm proposing the implementation of a formal employee suggestion and collaborative idea program.

Why?

- Employee suggestion programs have been **highly successful on multiple levels**, achieving greater productivity and inspiration for other companies:
 - *“Formal suggestion systems let employees know that their ideas are valued. Such systems may even **increase motivation and foster loyalty and teamwork** among employees.”²*
 - *“... companies with advanced employee recognition programs that tie monetary and non-monetary rewards to core business values are turning the tide against epidemic turnover and **generating bottom-line returns.**”³*
 - *“According to a study conducted by the Employee Involvement Association and reported in Industry Week, companies can expect to **save nearly \$350 annually per employee** by implementing a suggestion system. Companies that set up effective suggestion systems are finding that employees have great ideas that **can lower costs, increase revenues, improve efficiency, or produce greater quality.**”²*
 - *“...studies ...have shown that **people-centered management practices are associated with higher levels of profit, product quality, productivity, retention and customer satisfaction.**”⁴*
 - *“Some of the most effective case studies involve companies who presented the problem or need for cost-cutting to a team of "front-line" employees, who in turn **came up with a solution that was superior** to one that would have been made by executives alone.”⁷*
- **Managers themselves are more successful** when their employees work more effectively, collaboratively and productively.

- Staff productivity, inclusiveness and goodwill **all work in concert!**
 - “Employees **work together better as a team** and often submit ideas as a team. And they begin... looking beyond the scope of their own jobs.”²
 - “...the lifeline that most employees and leaders identify as important to them and the company: **Communication, collaboration and vision.**”⁷
 - “**Ideas and information tend to flow freely** around people and departments with the ability and willingness to evaluate and use these inputs effectively.”¹⁰
 - “when performance declines ...the need to reverse conditions is so strong that everyone involved misses crucial signs.”¹ So then there needs to be a spark, a collaborative inspiration, a new broad-minded perspective to achieve breakthrough.

How would such a plan be implemented (media, personnel & timing)?

- **Timelines**
 - “Experts recommend setting a timetable in which **receipt of an idea will be acknowledged** (ranging from 24 hours with electronic systems to one week with more traditional systems.”²
 - “Then **employees should be notified within 30 days** whether or not their ideas will be adopted.”²
- **Application media**
 - “Employees should come away with the idea that management intends to give full consideration to all suggestions and plans to act on the best ones in a timely manner. The suggestion system itself should also be **widely publicized and promoted**. Examples of possible systems include...
 - Suggestion box with written forms
 - Bulletin board for posting ideas and results
 - A special toll-free telephone line to allow employees to phone in suggestions
 - E-mail or postings to a dedicated Web site.”²
 - Part of the new version of the intranet.
 - “As more HR functions go online, there's an increased interest in bringing **awards programs online...**”⁵
 - Media application can be chosen by teams/management (see below), or all media can be made available for the submitter’s choice.
- **Personnel roles in the process**
 - Employees could form “self-managed” teams and implement process for suggestion reviews, submissions and promotions to the next level.⁸

- *Employee and/or the program team can come up with the best media for suggestion submissions.*
- *Or, suggestions can be reviewed by encouraging, immediate managers to consider promoting the suggestion.*
- *“Managers should also be encouraged to submit suggestions themselves, although they should not generally be rewarded for ideas that fall under their normal strategic planning responsibilities. It is also important for managers to raise the topic frequently in meetings and incorporate the **positive results of employee suggestions** into periodic progress reports.”²*
- *Employee Team Promotions: “Once the system has been introduced, it is important to follow up with **ongoing promotional activities** in order to maintain employee interest.”²*
- *Employee advisory committee for rewards (see below).*
- **Rewards**
 - Rewards suggestions
 - *“Even in cases where an idea is not used, the employee who submitted it should be thanked... provide a small, tangible reward for employees who submit an idea... for the first time, such as a **T-shirt, pen, or umbrella.**”²*
 - *“...it is also important to publicize the suggestions used and their positive impact on the company. One way ...might be to hold an annual dinner **honoring the people who made suggestions** over the course of the year.”²*
 - *“...some companies **distribute ...savings provided by the employee suggestion system** as part of their annual profit sharing programs.”²*
 - *Experts acknowledge that it can be complicated to develop an appropriate reward system that recognizes valuable employee contributions without creating jealousy and resentment among fellow employees. Some suggest that this task might best be delegated to an **employee advisory committee.**”²*
- **Program effectiveness measurement**
 - New **survey methods** for program effectiveness and encouragement
 - *“Organizational intelligence surveys... account for strategic factors that enable or inhibit employee engagement... **focus on action planning and change...**”⁶*
 - *“In survey after survey, employees indicate that “being appreciated” is a linchpin to job satisfaction. HR-savvy employers are finding they can **collect even bigger returns** when they establish formal employee recognition plans.”³*

A New Method of Suggestion Systems – Kaizen Teian

- *Kaizen Teian is an expanded employee suggestion and rewards program created and widely used by Japanese companies.*
- *“With the traditional suggestion system, employees’ ideas are evaluated and the small percentage of ideas that actually get implemented are rewarded. One of the drawbacks of such a system is that it consumes time, and such a leisurely approach is no longer practical. What is required in this ever-changing, competitive era, is promptness – quick decisions, judgment, and implementation... **the emphasis has shifted from suggestions to implemented improvement proposals.** This is kaizen reporting.”¹⁰*
- *“Kaizen empowers people to **make significant contributions – in more than just one area,** [utilizing]:*
 - *Judgment,*
 - *Decision,*
 - *Responsibility,*
 - *Execution,*
 - *and Benefit.”¹⁰*

What might the suggestion forms comprise?

- **Traditional employee suggestion form** (on page #5).⁹
- **Suggestion Investigation/Promotion-to-next-level form incorporating info such as:**⁹
 - *suggestor name*
 - *form #*
 - *reasons for/against idea adoption*
 - *estimate of the cost of adoption*
 - *estimate of first year’s savings*⁹
- **Teian Form** (on page #6 - from the Kaizen Teian System).¹⁰
- **Kaizen Form** (on page #7 - from the Kaizen Teian System).¹⁰

SUGGESTION BLANK

Suggestion #: 100
Date:

I suggest _____

All suggestions accepted will become the property of SMC³.

Suggestion #: 100
Name of Employee: _____
Dept.: _____ Is this your original idea? _____
Is any other employee entitled to participate in the award? _____
If so, who? _____

The administrator will detach this stub. Your identity will not be known to the committee until after the suggestion is passed upon by them.

Tear off this receipt and save it

Suggestion #: 100

- Receipt of this suggestion will be acknowledged promptly by note. (Use reverse side if necessary)*
- Instructions:
1. If drawings or other papers are necessary, attach to this suggestion form.
 2. State as clearly as possible the thought you have in mind, and the operation where your idea may apply.
 3. If you have any difficulty in preparing this form, contact a Symmetry Program Coordinator for help.

TEIAN

- *Suggestions*
- *Information For* *Other Departments*
- *Questions For* *Managers and Executives*
- *Advice*








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| Destination (to which Dept./Section?) | Date | |
| | Dept. Section | Name |
| Title | | |
| Benefit | | |
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| Problem (inconvenience, dissatisfaction) | | |
| Suggested Ideas/Advice | | |
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- Of your own work
- Of your own worksite

KAIZEN

Reporting Sheet (implementation)
 Consultant Sheet (to be implemented)

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| Date | | |
| Dept. Section | Name | Make it simple with diagram & drawing |
| Title | | |
| Benefit | | |
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| Problem (before kaizen) | | Improvement (after kaizen) |
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| | Human resources develop- ment (modest reward) | | Benefit determines reward | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Some Benefit | Considerable Benefit | Large Benefit | Upper-grade Evaluation |
| Effect | \$  | \$\$  | →  | \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$  |
| Focus | Support & Collaboration  | Support & Collaboration  | Support & Collaboration  | |
| Awareness | Advice or Guidance | Advice or Guidance | Advice or Guidance | |

Comments
Primary
evaluation

signature

For first-stage rewards, make a prompt decision, taking into account the skill level of submitter.

For upper-grade rewards, apply for a final evaluation by writing a recommendation for the submitter.

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