

Container Store salespeople covers the stores 10,000 products, the company's business philosophy, and ways to make strong connections with customers.

The employees-first philosophy has built a Great Place to Work (designated by the Great Places to Work

interbrand.com, accessed June 11, 2014; Andria Cheng, "Why the Container Store Stock Is Tanking," *MarketWatch*, January 8, 2014, <http://blogs.marketwatch.com>; Jessica Rohman, "With an 'Employee-First' Mentality, Everyone Wins: The Container Store," Culture Impact Brief, Great Place to Work Institute, 2013, <http://www.greatplacetowork.com>.

MANAGING TALENT

Valuing Labor Drives High Performance at HindlePower

HindlePower is a small company with a big idea for success. The Easton, Pennsylvania, manufacturer of battery chargers has just 75 employees, most of whom work in the factory as assemblers. Its president, Bill Hindle, sees those workers not merely as an expense but as a source of value.

That attitude becomes immediately evident when prospective customers visit the facility. At most manufacturers, a manager or salesperson would conduct a factory tour, controlling the experience to present the best face of the company. At HindlePower, employees are the best face of the company, so Bill Hindle simply offers a few safety guidelines and then invites visitors to look around on their own, asking any questions of the workers. More than once, Hindle says, the trust he places in his workers is what seals the deal with customers. They assume that workers in such an environment will be committed to quality.

Another sign of employee empowerment at HindlePower is the absence of time clocks. Employees do

not need to punch in and out, and the company has no rules for time off. If family needs arise during business hours, employees are authorized to leave and tend to their families, knowing their colleagues will pitch in to accomplish the required work. According to Hindle, employees have been responsible about making up their time off, to the point that hours in the factory consistently reach 97% to 100% of full-time. In other words, there is essentially nothing to gain from establishing rules and procedures to ensure that employees are on the job for the full 40-hour week.

Seeing workers as a source of value rather than merely a cost also helps HindlePower fill positions with skilled workers. Many manufacturers complain that there is a shortage of workers with the skills needed for modern production systems. However, Hindle has no trouble and says the solution is to be patient and invest in training. HindlePower established a program called the Professional Manufacturing Team, which couples

training with worker involvement in designing more efficient processes. The training consists of 25 to 30 courses in a curriculum tailored to each production line. Employees are responsible for completing all of the courses, and when they do, the company considers each one a manufacturing professional. Beyond the training, employee involvement in decision making brings meaningful results. In one case, the workers redesigned a production line so that instead of making 350,000 units a week, it now finishes 500,000.

Over the past decade, HindlePower's well-trained, highly engaged workers have enabled the company to generate average annual revenue growth of 15%, even during the recent recession.

Questions

1. Would you consider HindlePower a high-performance organization? Why or why not?
2. Besides the methods described here, what is one other way an HR manager at HindlePower could contribute to making the company a high-performance organization? How well does your idea fit with Bill Hindle's vision for his company?

Sources: HindlePower, corporate website, <http://www.hindlepower.com>, accessed June 11, 2014; Pete Fehrenbach, "HindlePower's Pro Shop: Greatness Within," *Industry Week*, June 3, 2014, ProQuest eLibrary, <http://elibrary.bigchalk.com>; Jill Jusko, "The Value of Labor," *Industry Week*, November 2013, pp. 24–26; Ann Wlazelek, "HindlePower Inc.: Manufacturing without a Time Clock," *Morning Call* (Lehigh Valley, PA), March 4, 2013, <http://articles.mcall.com>.

HR IN SMALL BUSINESS

Employees Make a Difference at Amy's Ice Creams

One of the bright spots for hungry people in Austin, Texas, is Amy's Ice Creams—its factory on Burnet Road or one of several Amy's stores. Founder Amy Miller, who dropped out of medical school to start the business, figures it is just another way to "make a difference in people's lives," offering customers a fun place to celebrate or cheer up.

Miller had been paying med school with a job at Steve's Ice Cream, but when the company was sold,

center. The room resembles an ice cream shop and includes freezers stocked with ice cream—a treat that patients can share with visiting family members.

Service to the community is also connected to employee engagement. At Amy's, the employees choose the charities the company will support. At a prom hosted by Amy's every year, the company selects a King and Queen to honor based on which employees did the most good.