



**'Well?'**

LaDonna Richmond models the latest swimwear. Ms. Richmond, a cashier at a local restaurant, wants to be a fashion model (photo by Art Blue).

**'Entry-level'**

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training necessary for these workers.

But because the jobs were in several divisions of the company, the single supervisor wasn't capable of assessing each worker's performance. The only ones able to do that were the immediate supervisors, who had daily contact with the workers.

The company had built an additional layer of supervision into its system, but the system probably worked better without it. All new employees could have gone to the same general training sessions, with the specific training handled by departmental supervisors.

Another pitfall is the quest for status by entry-level workers. Too many young employees don't know what it means to "pay their dues" in a learning position. They think the relatively low wages in an entry-level slot are an inadequate indicator of what they're worth to the company.

When I accepted a position as an accountant while still in college, I expressed my surprise that the accounting firm was paying only minimum wage, particularly because I had earned three times their hourly rate the previous summer as a salesman. The managing partner of the firm told me minimum wage was more than any young accountant was truly worth and that one day I would realize that the experience I'd gained would have been worth my paying the firm for the

opportunity to work there.

Although I didn't appreciate the comment at the time, the man was right. The experience was invaluable.

This is where the need for strong supervision comes in. Because entry-level workers see themselves as temporarily "accepting" a pay scale less than what they're worth, you need to guide them through the times when they begin to wonder, "Why am I doing this job for this kind of money?"

We all want workers who are ambitious. They must believe in themselves and their ability, and we definitely want them to be motivated to better themselves. But we also need to teach them to be realistic and to convince them that such realism often involves accepting promotions and salary increases at the company's pace instead of theirs.

Your sensitivity to these areas will help determine your retention rate of new employees. You need to "read" the employees and know when to prod or prompt and when to stand back.

You also need to allow the time spent at the entry level to be a learning experience for the workers. But take care not to hold back the person who is able to handle rapid promotion.

The true value of entry-level workers to your company will depend on whether they move into more responsible positions in which their benefit to the company increases.

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