

THE EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE®

Great leaders make the difference



*Economically tough times make for unpopular decisions in the workplace. Motivated teams are crucial to making it through a slump, but how can a leader keep their team motivated when everything is working against them? Executive Roundtable member, **Stacey Allerton**, Director, U.S. Labor Affairs at Ford Motor Company, shares her strategy for “shift”-ing the workplace routine to keep morale high.*

MENTORING MATTERS

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“Our business is under a massive amount of pressure and it’s been going on for a few years. There’s been continuous change in our industry and it’s increasingly tough to hit our targets. How do I keep my team motivated when the cards seem stacked against us?”

Almost every industry in North America is experiencing a disruptive marketplace where creating a challenging workplace guided by new values can tax even the most savvy leader. So, what's a caring, thoughtful person to do?

Outlined below are some tactics I've had some success with in my industry that just might resonate with yours. I call it the "shift" strategy.

Strip out the "waste" in your operation to allow your team to focus on what's really critical. Of course, this requires time to align your team around your key deliverables. Everyone on your team should understand exactly what they need to do to contribute to the team's priorities. Once that is clear, anything that does not support those initiatives should be revisited. Common areas of opportunity include:

Reports.

Are you customizing the same data for particular audiences? Is the information really needed to drive your business forward or is it 'nice to know'?

Meetings!

A fresh assessment of who needs to meet, when, and for how long can often reveal time and energy zappers in your team's day.

Technology improvements.

Are there areas of data management that could be automated or tech-enabled? A short term investment in technology can pay-off significantly in the long term use of your team's bigger potential.

Make sure your team's deliverables correspond with the key objectives. Anything that does not contribute to these priorities can and should get cut.

Hone your team's effectiveness by playing to the strengths of your team members. By breaking down the barriers that traditional roles and responsibilities bring, you can focus more of the team

Play to strengths whenever possible.

members' time on the areas where they're strongest and motivated to contribute. Spend time talking with your team about where they believe they can make the largest impact on the success of the group and work to organize your team to allow them the opportunity to spend a portion of their day in that capacity.

Innovate! When the cards seem stacked against you, change the game. At Ford, instead of thinking of ourselves just as manufacturers of cars and trucks, we're now thinking of ourselves as a mobility company. This opens up an exciting and interesting new perspective on our business model. When you view your business opportunities through the lens of innovation, you're driving change instead of reacting to it after-the-fact.

If the game's not working, change it.

Flexibility allows employees control and freedom to maximize their energy. With the line between work and home dissolving, employees are increasingly demanding a culture where they determine when and where they get work done. By focusing on results and not on 'face time,' you allow your employees to manage their energy and lives in a way that can sustain high commitment and engagement during turbulent times—without compromising business performance.

Always take time to appreciate your team members' efforts. This will let them know that, even if they can't see the results yet, their hard work isn't being wasted.

Thank employees for their efforts in ways that they value and appreciate. Get to know your team members' preferences for how they like to be recognized and tailor your approach to make your appreciation heartfelt. Get your entire team in on the act. Provide a venue for them to thank each other and celebrate the small successes together. Today, someone on your team has demonstrated the behaviors your organization values. Find them and let them know you've noticed.



Stacey Allerton is Director, U.S. Labor Affairs, Ford Motor Company. In this role, which she has held since January 2014, Ms. Allerton is responsible for directing the activities of the Company's Labor Affairs and Labor Operations functions and for managing its union relationships, primarily in the United States. Prior to her current role, Ms. Allerton held the position of Vice President, Human Resources, Ford Motor Company of Canada, Limited, where she served as Ford's lead negotiator for CAW National Negotiations from 2005 through 2012. In addition, she had responsibility for all aspects of human resources for the 7,000 employees at Ford's Canadian operations.

Ms. Allerton holds a Master of Arts degree in Industrial Relations from Wayne State University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business from Michigan State University.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Executive Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.