

“Yes” Employee

We have heard of the concept of a “Yes-Man” throughout our careers. Webster defines a Yes-Man as “A person who agrees with everything that is said: one who endorses or supports without criticism every opinion or proposal of an associate or superior.” Being labeled as a “yes-man” (or woman), certainly has not evolved into a term of endearment. We often think of these people as those lacking independent thought processes and only wanting to win the approval of leadership or anyone else talking.

Realizing the reason may be multifactorial; however, there is an aspect of this that should be explored more thoroughly. Perhaps a yes-man isn’t thinking in terms of any of these labels or stereo-types. It is not unlikely that this employee’s circumstances put them in a position to desperately need the job and the steady income. The path of least resistance is to support and applaud how right your superior is.



Here is where the danger lies. If you create an environment where all of your employees agree with you and never challenge your decision making, you have just placed a significant burden on your self to be right all of the time. This is impossible in the human world. The success or failure of your initiatives are all on you.

The Shingo principles start with this very important aspect of organizational development – Cultural Enablers of Leadership and Respect. By developing behavioral principles which they title “lead with humility” and “respect every individual,” you can start to enable your employees to free themselves from the fear of having an opposing view. In this respect you may actually achieve greatness through the minds of many rather than with all the pressure of trying to accomplish it on your own.