

## Pride: the differentiating characteristic



*Pride often determines how well a group does its job and the quality of its products.*

It's interesting to observe why and how some engineers rise above the masses, while other engineers do just what is needed, and a few produce designs with so many flaws that they give engineering schools a bad name. Typical factors such as basic intelligence, education, training, and experience are frequently used to explain the differences.

Often one other trait accounts for superior performance, and that is *pride*. This basic characteristic — often termed desire, ambition, attitude, mind set, etc. — can describe group behavior and accomplishments as well as individual contributions.

Such was recently discussed during a television show that elevated itself out of the vast wasteland. It told how two school systems in a relatively short time completely reversed their operations and images. Both schools eliminated graffiti on the walls and lockers, increased test scores, and created an environment that enabled the students to have more fun while learning.

The starting point in each case was installing a new school superintendent. Each took a tough approach and separated the few individuals who lacked pride from the majority. Those who didn't care were removed from regular classes and placed in special classes or expelled. Thus, the trouble-makers couldn't disrupt classes and lower the educational standards. This enabled teachers to teach and to instill in each student the importance of education. The system worked. The superintendents had pride in the school systems, the teachers had pride in their teachings and in the students, and the students developed pride in their education and abilities.

These schools show that where pride is encouraged, it can motivate people to rise above the masses.

Lack of pride produces devastating results. For example, when driving on one of the main city streets, I saw an adult throw a box of trash out of a third-story apartment window. Judging by the area around the building, this was just one of many such actions, all of which screamed, "I have no pride."

The work of engineers also shouts messages that show pride or lack of it. This applies to all sizes of organizations and to all types of activities — designing large automatic transfer machines, calculating the required servo gain for a ballistic missile, or designing a motion system for a new packaging machine. Often, but not always, a manager establishes a level of pride. Managers will usually serve their companies well if they are proud of their engineers, strive to obtain the best possible working conditions and equipment, and demand excellence in engineering. Plus, the engineers will enjoy going to work each morning. If the opposite is the case, work will be a drudge, designs will show it, and the company will struggle to compete.

Similarly, if an engineer at any level would rather be painting houses or operating a fishing camp than working as an engineer, or as an engineering manager, then he or she stands little chance of having pride in the work, enjoying the job, and designing quality products. Pride and enjoyment of work go hand-in-hand. Without both of these, quality suffers.

— Phil Kingsley  
Pkingsley@aol.com