

## Hightower inspires staff at petroleum company

As an executive, Steve Hightower never counted on his minority status to get him far. Instead, he has had to work through countless hurdles and a hard-to-breech industry to find success in petroleum.

### FINALIST

Hightower, who oversees 18 employees at Middletown-based Hightowers Petroleum, said longevity in the industry and providing attention to employees has helped him gain confidence as an executive and inspired his employees to target growth in the market.

"My success didn't derive overnight," Hightower said. "I've always had employees since I was 18, and longevity has honed my skill set."

Hightower said a good executive inspires his employees to see their job as more than a timecard and a paycheck.

Through communicating effectively, building a sense of trust and treating employees like family, executives can turn OK employees into good employees.

"An employee doesn't become a good



Steve Hightower

employee until they have that epiphany that makes them feel part of the family," Hightower said.

By caring about things important to them and understanding you don't always need to be so strict about the

rules, executives must make sure not to outweigh the human element of each employee.

However, at the same time, to be a successful executive you need to be more than a friend to employees.

"Show them that you care, but don't minimize the fact that they have to be producers," Hightower said. "They will perform if they know you care about them."

— Mary Beth Lehman