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25 Secrets to Managing a Successful Team

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"When leading the people within an organization, you as a manager must focus on both hiring the right people and then getting the most out of these people."

People Management Defined

Your employees are the biggest assets you have. Their performance and attitude can make or break your business. But you've probably found the most difficult part of any manager's job is people management. As a manager, you need to lead, motivate, inspire, and encourage. On the other hand, you are also responsible for hiring, firing, disciplining, and evaluating. These functions may seem to be at odds, but a successful manager can integrate both the positive and negative aspects of these tasks to create a thriving, productive work force.

People management, also known as human resource management (HRM), encompasses the tasks of recruitment, management, and providing ongoing support and direction for the employees of an organization. Within each task, a manager must handle the following: compensation, hiring, performance management, organization development, safety, wellness, benefits, employee motivation, communication, administration, and training.

When leading the people within an organization, you as a manager must focus on both hiring the right people and then getting the most out of these people. You want to bring in new personnel that will provide the best talent available to meet the needs of the business. Everyone in the organization must also look ahead to how a new employee can be used to his or her fullest potential. Getting the most out of an employee means a business has consistent policies and practices in place to provide its people with appropriate training and development. It also means getting employees involved as "partners" in the business.

Perhaps the most important task you will face in dealing with the people under your direction is that of bringing out the best in them. Unlocking people's potential is often seen as the key to any business's success. When an employee's talents are not channeled correctly, his behavior can seriously compromise the success of a company. If an employee's potential isn't reached or he doesn't feel like a team player, he may become a procrastinator, martyr, gossip, manipulator, backstabber, narcissist, a deer in the headlights, black hole, stonewaller, curmudgeon, bully, or predator.

It would be more effective to learn how to encourage effective, productive behavior at work, rather than learn how to deal with "problem" employees that develop defense mechanisms to mask their dissatisfaction. How does an effective manager do that? After identifying a problem behavior, address the employee immediately. Discuss with him why he needs to take responsibility for his ineffectiveness, how his behavior manifests itself, and how it affects the organization and other employees. Next, give the employee alternatives to his current behavior. Outline and teach him the following principles of achievement:

- cooperation
- respect
- self-motivation
- trust
- self-discipline

Now that the employee has alternatives to his current behavior, draw up a performance improvement contract in which he agrees to specific actions to change his ineffective behavior. After the contract is signed, stay involved and committed to the process of change. Do not assume that the problem will be automatically fixed now that it has been brought to light. Offer praise and reinforcement of any progress the employee is able to make. If there's a chance for positive change, it will be apparent soon after the initial confrontation. If things do not start improving, however, you will need to schedule a termination meeting quickly. One employee's toxic behavior can quickly spread to others within a business organization if the manager doesn't deal with it efficiently.

When evaluating an organization's workforce, you need to address several particular areas. First, the staff must have the tools and resources that they need to do their jobs effectively. You cannot blame

your employees for the business's inefficiency, if the employees don't have the equipment they need to perform adequately. Next, get to know each employee as an individual and make sure that they are all aware of their specific roles within the organization. Clarify their responsibilities and goals. Also, involve each employee in making decisions that affect their area of expertise. This gives the employee a "say" in what happens in the organization, and thus gives each person a sense of ownership. Finally, make sure that employees have an opportunity to have fun with their coworkers at appropriate times.

"People Empowerment" can be a very effective tool within the field of people management. By delegating authority, accountability, and responsibility to employees, you can involve them in any improvement program and allow them to take charge of making changes and improving processes under their control without first having to obtain permission. However, this is only successful when employees are recognized, congratulated, and rewarded for their commitment to solving problems.

What is Your Organization Saying?

For a ship captain, managing and motivating the individuals responsible for rowing is necessary, but it is equally important to steer the ship in the right direction. But the best navigation in the world makes no difference if the oarsmen are rowing in opposite directions. Like a ship captain, you as a business manager must first focus everyone's energy in the same direction. Make sure you are clear in announcing your course, which is your organization's mission statement, to inform everyone of where you are trying to go. Just remember, the people "rowing the ship" of your business are below deck, and don't have your view of the horizon, or bigger picture, each day.

Leadership is about much more than simply conveying your destination or your vision. It also means you, as a manager, must take steps to motivate and direct everyone to focus their energy on reaching that destination. The better part of leadership is human management.

You need to understand what motivates your people, and what's in it for them to work toward the communal goal.

So if you do not already have a mission statement, it's time to create one. If you do have a mission statement, when was the last time you reviewed it?

In order to create a mission statement, you need to think about the who, what, where, why, how, and when of your business. Then, have employees, customers, associates, and even strangers read your statement and interpret it to you. Does your mission statement say what you want it to say? Your statement has to be perfectly clear. Anyone should be able to instantly understand where you are going.

In addition to your company mission statement, which will be obvious to the public, you should also create an internal group mission statement just for your employees. Some companies even ask employees to write a personal mission statement of why they are there and how their job coincides with or contributes to the company's vision. This can be a real eye opener to you and to your employees. You should do the same. Once everyone has written an individual mission statement, compare each of their goals with yours, with the group mission statement, and with the company mission statement. Then, review job descriptions and make a second comparison. Make sure every project and team within your organization has a mission statement.

Mission statements are generally goals or destinations. To come up with these goals, assess your present position and compare where you are now with where you want to be. This will help you determine what you need from the employees you have and the employees you hire in the future.

What do the people already within your company have to say about the organization? Are they happy with company goals and their jobs? What do clients, customers, vendors, suppliers, and competitors say about your company? You do not need to invest a lot of time to discover this information, but a little investigating could prove insightful.

The morale of your employees will directly affect their ability to focus and affect the energy they are putting forth. Do your employees feel safe? What is safe? People are immeasurably more productive in a safe environment. Do employees have a feeling of job security? This is essential. Anyone who feels as though his job is in jeopardy will often have one foot out the door.

Do you stand behind your people? If a client or someone else outside the company complains about one of your employees, how do you approach the employee? Do you immediately begin with the assumption that the person is telling you the truth and maybe even start reprimanding your employee? Always giving your people, the ones you depend on to help you reach your goals, the benefit of the doubt and getting the facts straight will go a long way to establishing a safe and happy work environment.

Do you protect your employees? If a client or other person outside your company verbally attacks or is abusive to one of your employees do you draw the line and tell the person you will not tolerate such behavior? Allowing anyone to abuse your employees in the course of business demonstrates a disregard and devalues your employees.

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"Nearly all business owners say the ability to attract and retain great employees has been critical to their growth. The smartest companies put Human Resource systems and policies in place from the start. "

Developing Policy

Employees are probably the greatest internal variable in any business. People can make or break you, so it's important for them to understand rules and boundaries. Investing the time to create and implement personnel and company policy provides clear communication that can prevent issues and future liability.

Most small businesses cannot afford an HR department. Most entrepreneurs do not come from a Human Resources environment. Most founders of high-growth businesses have a background in sales, finance, engineering, or technology, which can lead to underestimating the importance of HR and policy.

Nearly all business owners say the ability to attract and retain great employees has been critical to their growth. The smartest companies put Human Resource systems and policies in place from the start.

All these policies and programs might seem like too much work. Some entrepreneurs are neither able nor inclined to implement people policies, but no matter whether you feel that way, there are some steps to simplify this important process.

Policy and Procedure

Creating Your Company Employee Handbook
A manual that spells out the procedures and policies for employee management helps employees have reasonable expectations, prevents disagreements, and minimizes liability. An employee handbook can also attract higher caliber employees.

As a manager, you must measure policy and procedures, along with work instructions, for adherence. Ensure employees are held accountable for their actions. Documenting employer expectations can build employees' confidence. Most workers are eager to please their bosses and are stimulated by defined performance expectations and promotional plans that help them know what to do.

Clarifying your expectations will also help prevent mistakes. If you're not sure what your expectations are, the process of creating a handbook will help you define your goals and management criteria. Managing in such a knowledge environment can prove much easier. When objectives for each position have been examined and established, the boundaries will be in place to dictate behavior.

After completing the first draft of your handbook, be sure to seek legal advice for a review of terminology and wording that best protects you. Courts will often interpret any vague provisions in the favor of employees if any action is brought against you. A written handbook, with clear, legal writing, is your best chance of not having a court case become your word against an employee.

To avoid legal pitfalls in the wording of these sections have your lawyer insert a disclaimer. Courts have a record of upholding the 'employment-at-will' doctrine in which the company expressly states that employment can be terminated at any time, for any reason. A disclaimer should also appear when there is any mention of firing and disciplinary procedures.
Sometimes an immediate firing of an employee is required. To protect against a lawsuit in such a case, a statement such as the following should appear with the list of unacceptable conduct: "This list is intended as an example only and is not intended to include all acts that could lead to employee discipline." With this statement, an employee contesting termination because "embezzlement" wasn't specifically

Policy and Procedure

listed in the handbook will have no grounds.

Be careful not to use restrictive language when you are writing policy. Words such as 'will,' or 'must' might bind you to actions you did not intend. Also avoid any 'probationary' periods of employment. Use words such as 'training' or 'orientation' for a 'trial' period. When practical, explain the reasons for policies.

Besides covering legal liability, your handbook should be encouraging and upbeat. Include some general history about your company and the benefits of employment.

Writing an Employee Handbook

Be sure to include the pertinent information listed below in your employee handbook, along with any other issues your company needs to address. Also, remain as succinct as possible.

Company Overview – Consider this the introduction to your company. In it, you could include your mission statement, history, growth, goals, ethics, and management philosophy.

Equal Opportunity Statement – State that an employee's religion, age, sex or race will have nothing to do with hiring, promotion, pay or benefits.

Work Hours – Define the normal work week, start time, end time, lunch, and breaks.

Pay and Performance – No specific numbers are needed here. General statements about paydays, pay periods, how promotions and wage increases are handled, classification of employees (part-time, full-time, on-call) and policies on leaves without pay, overtime, and other pay irregularities are sufficient.

This is also the area for policy on performance reviews. Employees will know in exactly what areas they will be evaluated and how often. You could also state that written evaluations can occur at any time to advise workers of unsatisfactory performance.

Benefits – Include insurance company brochures that explain your insurance policies. Define who is eligible for insurance, how long a new employee must wait for coverage, and what portion of premium costs the company covers. Include any additional insurance options such as dental or disability that employees can buy through the company. Explain policies on vacation and leave, including sick, military, bereavement, personal, family, medical, and jury duty. List paid holidays. State important numbers (such as group insurance numbers or the company code) and email or phone numbers where employees can speak to a benefits representative.

Pension or Profit Sharing Plans – Discuss when and how employees become eligible, whether an employee contribution is permitted or required, and when employees become vested.

Standards of Conduct – This is an important area where you lay down the foundation for acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Add dress code, timeliness, policies on sexual harassment, racial and sexual discrimination, use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco in the workplace (including pre-employment screening and post-accident testing), and disciplinary procedures.

Termination – Here, you will lay out the just causes for which an employee could be fired. This could include criminal activity, poor performance, dishonesty, security breaches, insubordination, absenteeism, company policy violations, health and safety threats, and dress code infractions.

Also add the disclaimer that the handbook is not a contract, policies can be changed at any time, and all employment is "at will." This means that the company's relationship with employees is not a guarantee of employment, and can be terminated at any time with or without cause or notice.

Employee Relations Procedure – Create an outline for handling complaints and other issues. This could include a grievance or wage dispute within a union setting, but it also includes such things as discrimination or harassment claims, or any other employee relations issue.

General Information – This might include area maps, a parking pass, an

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organizational chart, phone lists, a statement regarding the confidential nature of your business, and policies addressing gifts, use of company cars, traffic tickets, email, Internet use, and personal telephone calls. Make sure each new hire gets a copy of the handbook. Have employees sign a statement that they have received and read and fully understand the content. Make updates to your handbook as needed. Make sure you state that all new inclusions override all previous handbooks.

Hiring

The essential ingredient for people management is people. So, how do you hire the right people for your team? First, keep in mind that a person's capabilities should always outweigh their actual technical skills. Specific skills can be learned and are a fairly common commodity, but a person that actually likes to and wants to learn new things is a rare find.

Look for diversity. Don't try to hire people who think just like you do. New ideas will be hard to come by if you surround yourself with drones. Always look for someone who knows more than you do about the specific area for which you are hiring.

Values are also paramount. Make sure that this is a person who will represent you and your organization well. Make sure that this is a person who will "do the right thing" when it comes down to it. Finally, this new employee should be someone that you feel comfortable working with on a day-to-day basis.

Although teamwork is important, make sure the candidate has actually done and is capable of doing work on his own. Don't just rely on human resources or supervisor references. Ask former coworkers and friends of the candidate what he is like as a worker.

Don't rely solely on the standard "Help Wanted" ad in your local newspaper. Advertise on job posting sites on the Internet, and access resume databases. Encourage current employees to mention openings.

What Do You Have Offer?

Whether you are building the perfect team or hiring just one person, in order to attract the best you can afford, make sure you have examined the benefits of your business. By selling all the advantages of your company to prospective employees, you will minimize deficiency in pay or benefits compared to large organizations. While not everyone will be interested in the amenities that a small business has to offer, most of the time these are not the people you want anyway. Just a note, though: don't oversell your company. Remember to keep the applicant selling him or herself to you. Never hire anyone on the spot. Let them know you will be calling them later.

How, then, do you attract the best applicants? Consider some of the following things you might be able to offer prospective employees.

Geography
If you are hiring someone who will be working at your location, are you recruiting locally, nationally, or internationally? If you are expecting someone to relocate to your area, prepare an extensive list of local benefits and information. Housing, schools, shopping, restaurants, attractions, demographics, sports teams, parks, daycares, and community programs will all be important to candidates and a big part of your 'sell.'

Premises
What type of office will your employee be working from? Make sure you are providing an appealing work environment.

Schedule
Are you offering flexible hours? If you are able to accommodate flexible work schedules for some employees, this can be a great attribute.

Offering mothers with children in school hours while the kids are in class may bring you qualified applicants who might not otherwise apply. Moms will appreciate the opportunity to be at home in the mornings to see the children off to school, and to be there when they arrive home. By advertising these kinds of hours you might attract highly qualified employees who were not considering going back to work. You will have little or no competition for these candidates.

Students often make good employees while they are attending school. Offering flexible schedules and advertising at the local college could bring you a pool of talent from which to choose.

Passion and Philosophy
Don't underestimate the fact that you are a small business, or feel you need to excuse it. Small size can actually work to your advantage. The excitement and enthusiasm in a small business is usually higher because you are in direct contact with the people who have brought their passion to the table, the owners. Make sure candidates see how passionate you are about your business and explain your business and relationship policies to them.

Education
Offering to pay for continuing education is a great way to attract people. Make sure the subjects or courses are related to your business and establish an employment period before you will start paying for schooling.

Opportunity
In small business, growth is usually much faster and advancement opportunity is greater. If this is a possible option in your business, make that known to applicants.

Benefits
Whatever other benefits you provide, be they health insurance, savings plans, etc., make sure candidates are aware of them and understand how they work.

Money
Many times small businesses cannot afford to beat or match the offers of larger corporations. Make sure you know what you can afford and are willing to pay for the best candidate before you find one. If you are vague about what you can pay going into a negotiation, you're already at a disadvantage and will probably pay too much.

Job Descriptions

Always have a job description of the position for which you are hiring available. Know why you are hiring someone and exactly what he will be doing. A job description will give both you and the prospective employee a basis for asking questions.

A job description should be more than an outline of duties and responsibilities. Define the position in a way that will inspire dedication, create a means to measure performance, provide a defined support network, demonstrate a chain of communication, and clarify missions and goals. An accurate job description will be helpful when you're going through the hiring process, since you can present candidates with a clear outline of what will be expected of them. Writing a job description can help you establish employee expectations and minimize employment liability.

If you do not already have job descriptions for your present employees, have each one of them write a description on their own. You will likely need to edit or rewrite it, but their perspective could at least provide valuable information.

In addition to the position requirements, a job description should communicate the excitement of the opportunity.

Be sure to include:
- Job Title - An accurate title will reflect the function and level of the job. Only those who supervise others should be given the title of manager.
- Supervisor - State the job title of the person the employee will report to.
- Subordinates – Name the positions or type of workers that the candidate would oversee.
- Main purpose - The overall objective of the job and how this position contributes to the company.
- Main Duties - The main responsibilities of the job in detail.

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"Different occasions will demand different ways of leadership, and the flexibility to change from one style to another can be very important. "

- Skills, Education, Experience - The competency levels required to perform the job.
- Location – Where is the job based, and what travel may be required?
- Date – When was the job description last updated?

Management Styles

What overall method do you use to lead your employees? Your management style can be the catalyst for a successful career or the beginning of the end. Fortunately, none of us are born with a particular style of leading others, and we can develop one that works best for us and for those around us. Different occasions will demand different ways of leadership, and the flexibility to change from one style to another can be very important.

Although there is a plethora of terminology surrounding management styles, there are basically three different types. A manager can get his or her employees to perform at their best by using any one of these or a hybrid of them. The appropriate management style will give employees just the right amount of structure and support needed for the current project.

A manager who chooses to use a participatory style will give each employee, if possible, an entire task to complete. If it is not possible to give each employee a separate task, make sure that they all understand where their pieces of the puzzle fit into the final product. Make sure that all employees are clear about what the instructions for their assignments are. Explain the details and why they are important to the project's end goal. Make it clear that you, as the manager, are available to minimize any difficulties that arise. This will ensure that any complications are reported to you quickly and progress is not impeded.

A manager may choose to act as a director. When using this method, the manager answers five basic questions for his employees: What? Where? How? Why? When? An employee needs to know what the assignment is, where it is located, in what manner it should be approached, why it is important, and when the assignment should be completed. Answers to these questions should be given in detailed, unambiguous language, free from technical jargon. Employees should also receive precise short-term goals so that the manager is able to evaluate their progress. A manager utilizing a directing style should be willing and able to make decisions quickly.

The final managerial style requires teamwork. In order to take a team approach to a project, a manager must have solid communication skills and the ability to coordinate input from many different sources. This style can be used to expedite a project and optimize the process of completion if the manager is willing to relinquish control to the team. During the completion phase, each team member must present clear and concise reports and straightforward presentations that leave no questions unanswered. Otherwise, those who are working on other pieces of the project will be working under false assumptions and the success of the project will be jeopardized. After completion of the project, the manager must be willing to credit the team for its success, not his managerial skills.

Another way to look at management styles is to analyze your own personal leadership tendencies. A manager may be either autocratic or permissive. An autocratic manager makes all the decisions for his employees, while a permissive manager allows his employees to have a part in the decision making process and gives them considerable freedom in how they choose to complete their assigned activities. These two characteristics may be combined with either democratic or directive tendencies. A democratic leader allows employees to participate in the decision making process, while a directive leader tells his or her employees exactly how to do their jobs. The combination of these traits leads to four general categories of mangers: those who are directive

democrats who make decisions collaboratively yet closely supervise employees; those who are directive autocrats who make decisions on their own and closely supervise employees; those who are permissive democrats who make decisions collaboratively and allow employees freedom in carrying out their assignments; and those who are permissive autocrats who make decisions on their own yet give employees freedom in carrying out their assignments.

There are four basic situations in the workplace where you will have to interact with your employees. If the employees under your management are not willing or able to do the job at hand, you must tell them what to do and how to do it. When employees are willing and know how to complete a task, you can respond by delegating the appropriate tasks to the appropriate people. Employees who have the ability to do a job but need a little guidance as to how to go about it may respond well to a participatory setting in which their input is considered in the decision making process. Finally, if the employees under your management are willing to undertake a project but have no idea how to go about it, you may be put into the role of salesman. You will then have to demonstrate the skills necessary for the task at hand and elicit volunteers to accomplish each assignment.

There are pitfalls to all management styles. If a manager becomes too autocratic, his employees will become highly dependent and their motivation will be low. If a manager is paternalistic, making decisions in the best interest of the employees rather than of the business, employees can become dependent; and if he makes the wrong decisions, dissatisfaction will run rampant. A democratic manager runs the risk of slowing down the decision-making process; and a laid-back manager runs the risk of projecting a poor company image complete with lack of focus and direction.

So what makes a manager a good leader? Let's first look at the difference between these two terms, which are often used interchangeably. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online defines a manager as "a person who conducts business or household affairs" and a leader as "a person who has commanding authority or influence." Do you see the difference? Management deals with the everyday chores associated with a job, while leadership deals with people. According to Stephen Iscoe, "If given the choice, most people would rather follow a leader than be managed by a manager. To manage is to control and manipulate. To lead is to guide, influence, and persuade…things are managed and people are led." In order to be a good manager, you must be a good leader and vice versa. One cannot exist without the other.

People management requires you to use management skills when necessary and to use leadership skills when necessary. According to an old proverb, 'Leadership is doing the right thing; management is doing things right." Leadership can create financial opportunities, while management can turn those opportunities into profits. The necessity of the coexistence of these two skills was illustrated during the 2004 season of NBC's "The Apprentice". Bill, the entrepreneur, prevailed over Kwame, the Harvard MBA, as a result of his leadership skills. Kwame was a calm, cool, and controlled Ivy League-trained manager who was capable of delegation, but he couldn't provide direction and example when it was necessary.

"Management deals with the everyday chores associated with a job, while leadership deals with people."

Managers and leaders exhibit different characteristics. A manager rationally analyzes a situation and determines what needs to be done. He directs his energy toward the organization's goals. Most likely, he will become flustered when there is disorder. Innovation, to a manager, is "tinkering" with established processes. He sees the world as impersonal and static and influences people through the use of logic, facts, and reason. Work, for most managers, is something that must be accomplished and tolerated. They have an instinct for survival and seek to minimize risks. A manager focuses on how things need to be done and places his attention on the procedure. He communicates indirectly with subordinates. A manager is a regulator of the status quo and finds fulfillment in living up to the expectations of others.

Leaders, on the other hand, use their personal power to influence others. They have strong personalities and an intuitive understanding of what needs to be done. They use their energy to guide people to find their own practical solutions to problems and work to develop harmonious relationships. A leader will often respond well to disorder and chaos, performing at his best during these times. He can be prone to jump to conclusions without thinking things through and innovates through flashes of insight. The world, to a leader, is colorful and constantly changing. Work is the development of new approaches to old problems and is exciting and challenging. A leader will focus on what needs to be done while leaving the "how" to the people involved with the situation. He will work for an organization, but he is not a part of it. He looks for new opportunities and is constantly evolving. A leader finds his self-esteem through self-reliance and personal expression.

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"Nearly 90 percent of all problems with managing people stem from poor communication. "

Gender Differences

There are considerable differences between men and women in leadership or management, resulting from socialization or heredity. Female managers involve a more participative leadership style and generally have more empathy and sympathy for others. Women tend to lead with a democratic style, whereas men lead using an autocratic, directive style. The interactive leadership style common among women encourages participation and the sharing of power and information.
There are plenty of other differences between the typical leadership style of each gender, including:

-Women seem to nurture and promote the development of subordinates.

-Men lead from a viewpoint of competition, confrontation and conflict.

-Women seek harmony while men seek control.

-Men view power as dominance over others.

-Women usually see power as increased responsibility and use their power in a win-win manner to help others.

-Men see conflict as part of leadership and are openly competitive.

-Women see conflict as personal and in a negative and disruptive light.

-Women often use a transformational leadership style in the interest of pursuing a common goal.

-Men often demonstrate a transactional leadership style using structural power to reward and punish.

Communication

Nearly 90 percent of all problems with managing people stem from poor communication. Do you ever feel that "nobody gets it" and get tired of always trying to clarify the meaning of what you said, or apologizing for not saying what you meant? If this keeps happening, perhaps it's worth looking at the way you are delivering your message. Research shows that people retain only 10 percent of what they hear 72 hours later. Written communication has a 20 percent retention rate. That is why it is critical for owners and managers to provide proactive, consistent and clear communication. Remember, the biggest stumbling block to good communication is poor listening.

Here are five ways to be a better listener in a meeting with employees:

• Eliminate distractions: Make sure everyone attending the meeting leaves their cell phones outside the conference room.

• Meet in a quiet place whenever it's possible. That may mean not playing music, or meeting in a room with no windows, or with shades drawn.

• Clear off your desk or meet in an area without clutter.

• Spend three to five minutes in silence before you enter a meeting.

• Go into meetings with an open mind. Be prepared to listen.

• Be an empathic listener. Put yourself in each person's shoes.

• Know what the purpose of the meeting is and make sure everyone in attendance knows what you expect to accomplish in the meeting.

• If a meeting or conversation becomes heated or confrontational, take a break and delay the outcome.

Remember the analogy of a ship captain relying on his oarsmen to keep the boat moving while he navigated? All of your planning will be a waste of time if your oarsmen, or employees, do not know which way they should be rowing, are not motivated to row, or stop rowing. Effective communication is the key to relaying direction.

Besides communication with your employees, though, there is another type of communication happening that can reduce or even halt productivity. This is the communication among your employees. One estimate is that over 16 hours a week per employee is lost in the average company due to lack of employee communication and the fallout. That is equal to almost half of a 40-hour workweek! Poor communication may include misunderstandings, inappropriate chatter, manipulation, personal correspondence through chat rooms and email, social gathering plans for outside work, gossip, and news and events and other non work-related talk.

You cannot control everything other people are talking about, but you can instill a professional work attitude, plan and delegate enough work to keep employees busy, and monitor as much as possible. Consider whom you will be communicating with. What do you know about your employees? For instance:

Educational Background - What is the person's level and type of education? Are you choosing vocabulary he understands? Are you talking beneath him?

Lifestyle – Do you know the person's lifestyle? Avoid making any assumptions about people that could lead to offensive comments.

Life Experience – Communicating with a 21-year-old person can be very different than talking with a 55-year-old. With experience should come patience, comprehension, and hopefully, some wisdom. People relate new ideas and information to past experiences.

Ethnicity – We all work with people from various cultures and backgrounds. There may be specific terms or cultural vernacular the person does not understand, or certain things he says that you do not understand.

Geography – Where is the person from or where has he grown up?

Gender – Men and women relate to others in different ways. Our society has accepted certain expectations of gender roles and behaviors that are interweaved into communication. The identities formed for gender dictate how we communicate with each other.

Gender is an important consideration for communication because each sex views each other in dissimilar ways. Men and women behave and interpret situations differently.

Relationship- The relationship you have with a person is critical to conversation. How does this person see you?

Personality – Factor in the personality of an employee when you meet with him. Do what you can to get to know each person better so you can communicate better.

Past Behavior - If you know how someone has reacted to situations in the past, this is a good indicator of how he will react in the future.
After you have assessed the person you will be communicating with, consider how to put your message in his terms. Contemplate his vocabulary, listening ability, and pattern of thinking. Some people cannot handle more than a few simple instructions at once.

Now consider your method of communication. Some people respond better to verbal instructions, others a written message, while still other people need both. Ask people to repeat your instructions or communication back to you. You can do this without sounding condescending by saying something like this: "I'm not sure if I really communicated that well, could you tell me what I just said?" You might get some surprising responses, but this exercise gives you the opportunity to head off misunderstandings before they become counterproductive.

Everyone has filters through which they hear and interpret information. These filters include their level of vocabulary and language, their personal self-image, past experiences, their perception of you, and expectations. Don't assume anything when communicating with others. Remember to listen well. Most miscommunication can be contributed to poor listening.

If you're still having trouble communicating with employees, try a few of the following ideas:

Battling Opposition
When met with opposition to your ideas try using creative vocabulary to better explain them.

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"Whenever possible, set the mood, or control the environment where you communicate. People in a relaxed state of mind are more receptive to listening."

Disarm People

How can you make people more receptive to your message? Whenever possible, set the mood, or control the environment where you communicate. People in a relaxed state of mind are more receptive to listening.

Start conversations in a relaxed or neutralizing manner. While many managers and business owners feel chitchat is a waste of time, this can disarm people and put them in a receptive state. In addition, you will often get more and useful information from people when chatting.
A defensive person usually has reduced listening ability. They will not hear most of what you say. A person on the defense will stop at the words they find offensive. You will waste an incredible amount of time breaking down someone in this state.

Allow Time for Questions

In addition to having people repeat your instructions or statements, ask them if they have questions. If you're in a group setting, also allow private time for one-on-one questions from individuals involved in the group. You could also let them ask questions via email. People will often be willing to discuss things privately that they would not ask in a group setting, because they do not want to appear less intelligent in front of their peers.
Follow up with people and ask if they need assistance or have questions about a project or task.

Project Communication

The major shortcoming in project management is the difference between expectations and results. This is often due to lack of communication, or misunderstood or poor communication.

Many people require visual communication to understand concepts.

How to Give Orders

Once you have decided whether a situation calls for managing or leading, how do you convince your employees to complete the task at hand in a timely manner? Most importantly, do not give orders. Instead of telling someone what to do, tell them what you want or need done – that is, give instructions or guidelines. Giving orders to your employees has several drawbacks. The person must respond in the prescribed manner and is not allowed to figure out what he thinks is the best way to handle the task. You, as a manager, are not letting your employees learn. Finally, you are limiting them to your level of expertise.

There are definite benefits to not telling an employee exactly how to complete a project. When an employee is given instructions instead of orders, he must invest a little bit of himself in finding a solution to the problem. There is always a chance that he will come up with a better solution than the one you had in mind. Also, if the employee has come up with the method of accomplishing the task, he will believe that the solution is a good one and will defend it to others.

Make sure that any instructions you give to employees are clear and concise – just as clear and concise as if you were giving them orders. F. John Reh, a management advisor for About.com, tells the story of his nine-year-old niece at a recent family gathering to illustrate this point.

According to Reh, the young girl was using some new colored pens to draw pictures of horses on scraps of paper she found and then giving the drawings to family members. The first horse she drew was a combination of blues and greens and was kneeling in tall grass. She drew the subsequent drawings in vivid hues as well and depicted horses in different real-life positions. When Reh jokingly asked his niece where his drawing was, she asked him what color he wanted. He told her that he would like to have a drawing of a red horse and she scampered away to complete his request. She returned with a monochromatic drawing of a stationary horse. This, of course, was not what Reh had in mind after seeing her previous colorful, animated drawings. However, he points out that he learned a valuable lesson in giving instructions.

When giving instructions, you must communicate clearly what you want the end product to be. Tell your employee what you have liked about his previous efforts and involve him in the planning of the new project. Monitor his progress in case there are any misunderstandings. Establish a timeline for the completion of the task. Last, but certainly not least, find a way to motivate your employee to put forth his best effort.

Another important task that you will have to deal with when managing people is delegation. Delegation should always serve two purposes and should not be used just to get extra tasks off of your plate and on to someone else's. A delegated task should be one that will lighten your workload and allow you to concentrate on more important tasks, but it must also be a task from which the receiver can learn and grow from his accomplishment.

When you are deciding whether or not to delegate a task, consider the specifics of the task and which of your employees has the experience, knowledge, and skills that are most applicable to its completion. Once you have settled on who will be assigned the task at hand, think about how he works best – i.e., does he need close supervision and detailed instructions or does he work better with fewer constraints? Consider the employee's current workload when you assign timelines and deadlines for the new task. Make sure he has access to all the resources that will be necessary to successfully complete the task. This includes communicating to the rest of your staff that this person has your authority to do whatever is needed for successful completion of the project. Make your expectations and goals clear and relay to the employee what role you will play in monitoring and supporting him along the way.



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"What can I do to make my employee's job easier? What gets in the way of his accomplishing the job?"

Communication Blunders

Here are some of the most common communication issues you may run into as a manager. Do your best not to be the source of any of these.

- Giving Poor Instructions
- Inability to Listen to Instructions
- Causing Personal/Emotional Discord
- Inciting Anger
- Miscommunication of Ideas
- Revealing Proprietary Information
- Irrelevant Communication
- Counterproductive Communication
- Confusing Communication – Mixed Messages
- Lack of Communication
- Inappropriate Communication
- Dishonesty

The following can also cause communication blunders: time spent expressing ideas, correcting statements, dealing with employee and personal repercussions of miscommunication, time wasted due to poor instructions, or inability to listen to instructions.

Feedback and Performance Reviews

Whenever we think of a performance review the first thing we imagine is a long checklist and a written report. While documenting all employee meetings is wise, providing employees with useful feedback about their performance is personal and should be handled so.

While you should describe expectations in measurable results, remember, you can't measure all performance the same way. You should provide feedback on a daily basis. This does not mean an employee review meeting needs to be conducted each day, but watch for opportunities to offer your thoughts on performance. The opportunity for feedback to have the greatest impact is at the moment of performance.

Most feedback should start in the form of a question. This gives the employee a chance to speak and draw conclusions and will provide you with more information.
Example:
Owner: "Why did you have the customer place the shipping cost on a credit card?"
Employee: "Because I know our policy states no COD orders."
Owner: "How did you know that?"
Employee: "I read it in the new policy book."
Owner: "Why, we just put those in everyone's inboxes at quitting time last night."
Employee: "Yes, and I took it home and read it."
Owner: "Only a dedicated employee would do such a thing. Well done!"

This type of feedback does more than reinforce good behavior through approval. In this scenario, the owner makes a comparison between this employee and a "dedicated employee." Hearing that comparison lets the person reach his own conclusion: that he is a dedicated employee. As you can see, timing was everything for this employer and employee. The sooner and more frequently you provide employees with feedback, the sooner and more often you'll have information.

There are numerous questions a manager or business owner should be asking himself. Here are just a couple to consider: What can I do to make my employee's job easier? What gets in the way of his accomplishing the job?

Develop a system and make it your habit to ask questions, obtain information, and provide feedback. This creates a work environment that inspires employees to focus on their jobs and instills safety in the exchange of information.

Make sure your feedback system excludes emotional situations. If an employee has faltered or has become emotionally charged, wait and approach him privately. Also if a feedback conversation turns negative, adjourn it and pick it up later in private. Feedback should be an open exchange of information that never belittles or ridicules an employee.

Be sure to ask your employees for feedback as well. Ask about your company, your philosophies, and your management style. One reason feedback is so important is that most of us are great at self-delusion. We often think we are better than we really are. Keeping the lines of communication open in both directions will greatly increase productivity. Years ago feedback only consisted of raises and promotions. If you got them, your work must be satisfactory. If you didn't, you probably need to start job hunting. Raises and promotions alone provide approval but little feedback.

Conflict Resolution

Common dispute resolution procedures have failed to reduce tribunal applications to upper management and complexity in workplace conflict. The "Managing Conflict at Work" survey found that dealing with disputes costs the average British employer about 350 days of management and Human Resource time every year.

Conflicts will arise in the workplace – whether they are turf wars or personality conflicts – and must be dealt with. As a manager, your job is to create an environment in which your employees feel comfortable and thus perform at their best. If you are approachable, they will feel comfortable coming to you before going to Human Resources or upper management. However, if you choose not to intervene in conflicts that arise, you will put the positive atmosphere you have worked so hard to create at risk.

Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. Meaningful conflict can be a mainstay in a healthy, successful business. How can arguments breed success, you might ask? Disagreements are necessary for problem solving and for strengthening relationships. When people are free to disagree, it is more likely that all options for a project will be discussed and that better decisions will be made.

Conflict is uncomfortable for many people, and many will avoid it at all costs, particularly in the workplace. These people do not know how to participate in and mange conflict in such a way that the disagreement can have positive ramifications. They are afraid that conflict will harm their relationships with their coworkers, who they have to see every day. As a manager, your job is to create a workplace atmosphere in which your employees feel comfortable expressing different viewpoints.

The first step toward this goal is to make your expectations clear. Your employees should understand that differences of opinion are okay and that you expect them to voice these opinions. Discussion about issues should be the status quo, not the exception. As long as everybody is working toward a common goal, there is always more than one way to get there.

Recognize employees who are willing to go against the flow and voice a differing opinion. Thank them for taking a stand. However, make sure that your employees are able to support their recommendations with facts and figures. Disagreeing just to disagree will get you nowhere and personal attacks are never acceptable.

Hire people you believe will add value to your organization by being willing and able to problem solve and debate issues. Behavioral interview questions can aid you in identifying these candidates. Look for someone who is willing to go against the grain and is not worried about his popularity in the workplace. Provide newer and older employees alike with training in healthy conflict resolution and problem solving.

If you experience little dissension in your workplace, look at your own attitudes and actions. Do you send verbal or nonverbal messages that suggest disagreement will not be tolerated? Do you "grill" employees publicly when they suggest completion of a task via different methods than you had originally proposed? Do you punish employees when a solution they had proposed to a problem fails? Discuss with your employees if and why they are reluctant to voice differing opinions. Rectify any problems, including your own attitudes, which may be standing in the way of healthy, constructive work conflict and debate.

There will be times that conflicts get out of hand and as a manager you will be required to step in and provide a resolution to the matter in order to preserve workplace harmony. Signs that a conflict has escalated too far include: employees criticizing other staff members, an increase in the number and severity of negative comments, secret meetings among staff members, and email wars.

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"Disagreements that become out of hand result in a hostile atmosphere and other employees may end up taking sides."

When you have identified a situation in which you feel you need to step in, there are three things you must avoid doing in your attempt to mediate the disagreement. First, do not avoid the conflict and hope it will resolve on its own. Most likely, it will not, and, even if the situation does subside, it will resurface whenever stress increases. Second, do not meet with the parties involved on an individual basis. If you do this, you place yourself in the position of judge and jury, and the parties feel that they must prove themselves to be right. There will be no willingness to compromise. Third, do not convince yourself that the only people affected by the disagreement are the participants. Disagreements that become out of hand result in a hostile atmosphere and other employees may end up taking sides.

So what should you do if you have to step into the middle of a disagreement? Make it a point to meet with the individuals involved together.

Allow each party to present his case without interruption by the other party. Ask each employee what he would like to see the other employees do differently. You, as a manager, may need to step in at this point and provide the means or give the permission necessary for the desired changes to take place. All participants should discuss and commit to making these changes. Make sure that you remain neutral during this discussion and make it clear to those involved that you expect them to take proactive steps to resolve the conflict within a specific time frame. Let them know that it is okay to have disagreements over issues and plans, but that it is not okay to let personality conflicts affect the entire organization. If these personal issues continue to be a problem, disciplinary action or dismissal may be called for.



Motivating People

There are several considerations when determining the best way to motivate people.

What do you want from them?
Whether you are trying to motivate someone to do more of something, stop doing something, or change something, most motivation is about behavioral change. This type of change is difficult for all of us.

How much do you want from them?
Whenever possible, you need to place a measurement on what you want from someone. This will help you determine and communicate your expectations. You also give the person the opportunity to measure performance while you monitor progress.

Understanding your expectations of people in the following units of measurement can assist you in gauging the feasibility of your expectations.

Measurements of Expectations

Time:
Will the person have the appropriate amount of time available to meet goals?

Money:
If the measurement of success is money, rather than just setting a monetary goal such as increasing profits by five percent or reaching a higher sales volume per month, break down the total dollar amount into units.

Improvement:
A warehouse and production manager with 150 employees under his supervision had seven employees that were habitually late to work. These employees were all team members on a production line, and held up production by 10-20 minutes every day.

The manager did not like motivating from a negative stance, but tried reprimanding the employees. He had no results. Then, he changed their starting time from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. The same seven employees began showing up at 6:40-6:50 a.m. each day.

As these seven employees were all above average performers, the manager was not ready to terminate them just yet. He decided to crunch some numbers, and discovered that the delay in start time with other employees on the clock and idle and lost production time was costing the company more than $70,000 per year. He discussed this with all seven employees individually and posted a notice about the cost of tardiness. He then began docking the pay of each employee who was late, by twice his wages for every minute.

Two of the seven employees immediately changed their behavior and became punctual.

After a week, he announced that all employees on any team would be docked for any member not present at the start of the shift. Four of the remaining five employees stopped showing up late. The remaining employee was eventually terminated.

In this case, some employees were motivated by money, some by peer pressure, and one was not interested.

Here is a secret about motivating people: If the person does not want to change, chances are you will not be able to change them. The trick is to find what will motivate someone to want to change his behavior.

While planning for success with each person you manage or desire to motivate, you must also determine each person's point of no return. This is the point when the person is not willing to change and the energy, time, and money are no longer worth the investment. This was the case in the preceding analogy with the final employee being terminated. Implementing any more programs specifically for this last person of the group of seven simply was no longer economically feasible. In addition, the behavior of this employee could have a detrimental effect on other employees. After all, if he were allowed to remain employed while ignoring the rules, why, maybe there would be no consequences for any of them.

Unfortunately, many people are motivated only by the fear of negative consequences. This forces a manager to become a disciplinarian.
In any situation that arises, ask yourself: Why does this person need motivation? What has worked to motivate this person in the past? Does he have the tools he needs to complete assigned project? Is he going to be dependent on the performance of others to meet his goals? What do I want from him? What position does he hold in the company?

In addition to finding ways to help motivate your employees, considering these questions makes you better able to comprehend what you are asking of someone. If the change is difficult, you might want to break down your expectations into units.

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"Recognizing an employee for work well done is also paramount to retaining that employee. Employee recognition has been shown to improve communication, productivity, and the workplace environment."

Positive Motivation

Employee Recognition

An important, yet often overlooked, piece of people management is employee recognition. If you reward employees when they do good work that gets you closer to your company's goals, you reinforce actions and behaviors that you want to see them and others repeat. Employee recognition is not just a way to show your employees that you're a nice guy; it is a way to encourage behavior that is advantageous to your company's success. In addition, employees who feel that their employers truly care about them and their well being will produce better results. In fact, studies have shown that praise from a supervisor ranks higher than money, benefits, or incentives in conveying that a company values its employees. Recognizing an employee for work well done is also paramount to retaining that employee. Employee recognition has been shown to improve communication, productivity, and the workplace environment. Employees are more motivated to produce desirable outcomes, and their motivation influences their colleagues to do the same. Happier employees also tend to produce happier customers. Therefore, recognition of even a single action of a single employee can have far-reaching benefits.

An effective recognition system will be simple, immediate, and powerful. All employees should be eligible for recognition. When showing recognition, communicate it in such a way that everyone understands what specific actions are being recognized. You could communicate it through a company newsletter, an email announcement, or at a staff meeting. Never use a reward system in which upper management chooses the recipients. These systems end up being viewed as "favoritism" or they become ineffective because employees believe that "everybody will get their turn eventually".

Recognition can be accomplished in a multitude of ways. Of course, you can do it verbally in front of an employee's co-workers. If you prefer private recognition, write a letter and place it in the employee's file. You might also write a personal note and accompany the note with a gift. For the gift, you might choose a motivational poster, an engraved item, a gift basket, some organizational logo merchandise, or a gift certificate. If you'd like to go the high-tech recognition route, you could try web-based employee recognition, such as that available at www.kudosnow.com. This and other similar sites allow you to track recognition points and encourage your staff to obtain a certain number of points in order to receive rewards.

Remember, most people get out of bed every day, fight traffic, and report to work because they need money. They don't necessarily like their jobs. That's why more money is not always a motivator for such people. Getting more money does not change anything; they still have to get out of bed every morning and go to work. So you need to find out what other factors will motivate your employees. How can you get them to perform better? Recognition can be a big motivating factor.

Recognition – Awards or Rewards?

There are almost as many ways to keep employees happy and productive, as there are employees. But since recognizing employees and their efforts will go a long way with most of them, you must figure out the best way to recognize employees and show your appreciation.

While some people are satisfied with as little as a 'thank you' or 'good job' pat on the back, still others respond to material tokens of appreciation. Recognizing employee accomplishments and dedication in a group setting with a gift card will serve two benefits. The employee will have the acknowledgement of coworkers, and he'll have another chance to reflect on your appreciation in private when he uses the gift card. Some employers like to give magazine subscriptions as gifts. Especially if you choose a magazine that's relevant to an employee's interests, he might sense more

personal appreciation and the thought you put into the gift. In addition, the employee will be reminded again of this appreciation each month when the magazine arrives.

Be careful not to create only competitive reward programs. This can actually backfire and cause negative feelings among people who feel left out of the rewards. That in turn may begin a cycle of blame as they attempt to dismiss their lack of recognition.

If you choose to go with an awards system, there are lots of choices there as well. Awards can be personally engraved plaques of recognition for employee of the month, salesperson of the month, good attendance, punctuality, years of service, effort above and beyond the call of duty, or simply for a job well done.

As you can see, there is a wide selection of awards and rewards for appreciating employees in the hopes of motivating them. There are also awards and rewards at the end of successful projects or when goals are reached. If you are announcing an award or reward as a way to encourage performance, make sure the criteria are clear and the goal attainable.

Presentation
As many people are motivated by recognition, the presentation of awards can be as important or more so than the awards themselves. Create an event or awards ceremony, and have as many people as possible present. In certain instances, having the employee's family present can enhance the occasion and your purpose. Many people are proud to have their spouse or family know how important their work is and how they are appreciated. This can carry over and go a long way at home the next time they need to work late or make some other sacrifice for the company. People like to know their loved ones are in a good environment when they are away at work. They will be much more tolerant knowing how important and needed their loved one is on the job.

Make sure you have done your homework and know exactly why the employee is receiving the reward. Being aware of the extra effort or sacrifices he has made will also make him feel respected.

If you filled your car with gas one month, you wouldn't think that would be the only time you'd ever need to put fuel in it. Likewise, when an award or reward program is done, don't assume that's enough. Start a new performance and award program to motivate employees right away. People need fuel regularly too.

Getting the Most Out of People

Your employees are your business's most valuable assets, and they all have a lot to bring to the table, so you want to build an atmosphere that encourages creativity. The rules of acceptable social behavior infiltrate even the smallest groups of people. Employees are generally reluctant to make suggestions and express ideas because they fear appearing less intelligent and subjecting themselves to ridicule.

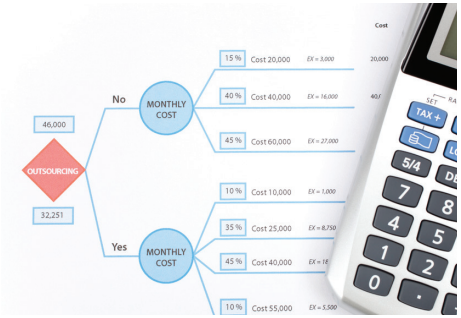
You must create an environment of open expression through encouragement and restriction of judgment. Communication can only become truthful and beneficial through open listening.

So many times managers base an employee's performance on the job he is doing and how well the individual is producing within the boundaries of the job description, with no awareness of his potential. Managers often shield themselves from insubordination and maintain control, by creating and preserving the perception that they know everything. However, this persona stifles expression of ideas and knowledge and prevents the cultivation of inspiration and innovation among your workers. Keep it up and your employees will become discouraged and feel the job or company holds no potential for them.

Asking or demanding the best from your employees is pointless if you have no idea what their best is. Only by listening to their ideas will you encourage them to think and discover how great they might really be. A recent study suggests communication confusion wastes more time in business than any other thing. So, it's very important to foster an environment of open exchange.



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"Managing outsourcing does still require people skills. Make sure your contractors share your vision. "

Managing Outsourced Contractors

In today's market, small business owners will at some point probably outsource labor, service, or project needs. Managing outsourced contractors is different than managing employees. Instead of an employee handbook, your guide for these contractors will be a contract.

Negotiating outsourcing differs from employee pay negotiation. You can get quotes and compare services and products from contractors.

Managing outsourcing does still require people skills. Make sure your contractors share your vision. The reasons for outsourcing vary from saving time and money, to strategic alliances. Decide exactly how outsourcing will benefit you. Your goals will have an impact on selection and management of the relationship.

Make sure your specific requirements leave room for contractor innovation. The complexity of outsourced services requires extra flexibility with risk/reward sharing that encourages optimal performance.

Put clear performance measures in place. Specify your requirements in terms of outcomes. Create standards to measure performance. This will help ensure high quality service, when incentives and penalties are attached for over or under performance. These standards might need to evolve over time.

Setting clear communication channels is also essential. Make sure everyone knows how often you will be communicating and how to reach you in the interim.

Employee resistance can be a major issue when outsourcing. Impact can be seen in morale, productivity, and employee turnover, and be aware that even sabotage is a possibility.

Make sure you discuss what is being outsourced and why. Assure employees of their job security and train them in their new roles.

Disciplining Employees

Employee discipline is negative motivation. While not optimum, when positive motivation is not working, this might be the only alternative.

Your employee handbook should be the guide for any discipline. Most employees will be aware if they have broken rules, and should have a clear understanding of the consequences. Depending on the attitude and past behavior of the employee in question, you might choose to give him the benefit of the doubt for ignorance the first time. But if he doesn't take steps to correct the behavior, follow your procedures to the letter.

If you have employees who do not speak or read English, have these rules translated into their language.

The Elements of Disciplinary Procedure

Time – Discipline should occur in a timely manner and as close to the time of the infraction as possible. Don't make rash decisions, without careful consideration, but if you wait too long, it could set a bad precedent and have a negative effect on other employees. They could start thinking, "If he gets away with it, why can't I?"

Consistency – Make sure you are consistent with disciplinary measures and among employees. Also, threatening to carry out disciplinary action and not carrying through creates an atmosphere of distrust.
Investigate - While a full investigation is not always necessary, make sure you have absolute proof to back up any claims. Don't just take the word of one coworker over another.

Documentation- Make sure everything is documented. This includes all offenses, descriptions, witnesses, dates, times, places, and actions taken.

Make sure the employee signs a copy of a discipline report.
Implement a Progressive Discipline Program – Progressive discipline involves the use of increasingly harsher forms of punishment in an attempt to correct behavior and/or poor performance.

A Four-Step Disciplinary Program
One - Verbal reprimand and corrective advice between the supervisor and the employee. This should be documented and kept in the employee's personnel file.

Two - Written warning with a copy for the employee ad employee files.

Three - Suspension, usually without pay.

Four – Termination.

Terminating Employees

After you have exhausted disciplinary measures or when an employee has committed an egregious act, you might be faced with having to fire someone.

If a situation reaches this point, document everything. You should have a signed copy of statement that says the employee read and fully comprehended the company employee handbook and the job description. Now be sure you have every one of the employee infractions documented with the date, time, and witnesses. Keep records on all of the employees' tasks, performances, infractions, and warnings. Make sure you have followed all policies and procedures in your employee handbook.

Record how an employee's actions, behavior, or attitude has injured business and affected production, coworkers, and clients.

Be prepared when you terminate:
• Anticipate the need to replace the employee.

• Prepare a checklist and timetable for the day.

• Assure confidentiality. Regardless of the reason for termination, be respectful.

• Find privacy. Keep a door open but not where others will hear. Be sure to have a witness.

• Have back pay and personal belongings ready.

• Notify security, if necessary and available. Ensure a safe departure from the building.

• Make sure all proprietary information has been confiscated, future access prevented, and passwords changed.

Never give a suspect employee who knows they are going be terminated notice. If you feel an ethical obligation, pay them the equivalent of time of notice.

The time limit for bringing an unfair dismissal claim is three months from the dismissal date, but this can be extended where it is not reasonably practicable.

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"Companies that put people management in the forefront... seem not only to succeed in that area, but also are overall successes. "

People Management Success Stories

According to CNNMoney.com, the ten most admired companies in the area of people management are as follows:

1. FedEx
2. Procter & Gamble
3. Google
4. General Electric
5. Genentech
6. Starbucks
7. CHS
8. Kinder Morgan
9. Kinder Morgan Energy Partners
10. Exxon Mobil

Let's take a look at the philosophies of some of these organizations when it comes to the human resources aspect of their business. Starting with number one, the FedEx website contains the following statement about its people:

> "To provide the level of service and quality necessary to become, and to remain, the leader in the air express cargo transportation industry, Federal Express has developed a unique relationship with its employees, based on a people-first corporate philosophy. Founder and CEO Frederick Smith determined to make employees an integral part of the decision-making process, due to his belief that 'when people are placed first they will provide the highest possible service, and profits will follow.'"

Similarly, Procter & Gamble makes the following statement in an advertisement recruiting employees to the organization:

> "Procter and Gamble is #1 in People Management. We are committed to building and developing our organization through our "Promote from Within" philosophy. We primarily recruit talented people at entry level with the intention of having a productive long-term relationship that develops them to take on future leadership roles."

Putting people first seems to be the bedrock of these two successful companies' philosophies.

Shouldn't people management be just as important in your organization? Companies that put people management in the forefront, such as the two mentioned above, and the one discussed below, seem not only to succeed in that area, but also are overall successes. All three of these companies are among CNNMoney.com's top twenty most admired businesses overall.

Fortune online states the following regarding Starbucks:

> "It's green, it's human, it's politically correct, it sells a popular product and provides a comfy place to hang out and consume same – what's not to like?"

Howard Schultz was manager of U.S. operations for Hammarplast, a Swedish firm that manufactured drip coffeemakers, when he convinced the owners of Starbucks to hire him as Director of Marketing and Operations in 1982. The owners resisted his plan to actually brew and serve their coffee in retail stores and Schultz quit. He started his own coffee-bar business and bought Starbucks for $3.8 million one year later. His desire was "to build a company with soul." His people management policies, such as providing all employees working at least twenty hours per week with comprehensive health coverage and offering an employee stock option plan, resulted in loyalty and low turnover. He offers four principles to those who wish to follow in his footsteps: 1) Do not be threatened by people smarter than you. 2) Compromise anything but your core values. 3) Seek to renew yourself even when you are hitting home runs. 4) Everything matters.[1]

[1] www.myprimetime.com/work/ge/schultzbio

Advice to Help Your Employees Get Along With Each Other

1. Watch How You Respond

How you say something is as important or more so than what you say. How many times have you been criticized by someone and felt angry because of his tone of voice or attitude? Not responding or walking away when you feel resentment or anger will deflate the situation.

2. Use Promises Sparingly

People seem to remember a broken promise forever, even as something as simple as offering to pick up their lunch while you are out, and not doing it. People will consider you irresponsible and you'll get a bad reputation when you don't do what you say you will.

3. Listen to Others

You can gain the confidence of people by being a good listener. Learn to listen without passing judgment. While this might be sometimes difficult, you will keep the lines of communication open and build trust with people who know they can talk to you about anything. Listening to people makes them feel important and worthy. When you practice listening with empathy and without judgment, those people will be there for you should you ever need them.

4. Win Every Argument

The only way to win any argument is to avoid it. Don't let yourself get into arguments with others. Learn to discuss subjects without opposing viewpoints. You can always agree to disagree with anyone.

5. Leave Your Trash at Home

Don't talk about personal issues in the workplace. When you walk in the door, leave your personal life outside.

6. Never Talk about Anyone Who is Not Present

Refuse to gossip or speculate about other people. Gossip is a harmful and vicious snake that will most often turn and bite you.

7. Be Considerate

Do not laugh at the expense of others. Be considerate and think about their feelings,

8. Ignore What Others Say about You

You will appear strong when you do not react to what others say about you. Let your actions speak for you.

9. Keep Your Work Ethic in Check

Do your best and set an example for others. Find the pride and passion in your work.

10. Encourage Others – Give Them a Good Reputation to Live Up to

Compliment others on their work and progress. Always have something good to say about people.

11. Be Optimistic

An optimistic person attracts people. Keep your attitude in check and look for the good in everything.

12. Be Independent

Stick to your guns and don't be swayed when people resort to gossip or a lower standard of behavior.

13. Return Borrowed Items

If you borrow something, return it as soon as you are finished.

14. Try the Source First

Before going over someone's head with a simple issue, try approaching them first. If you cannot work it out, then seek the assistance of your supervisor.

15. Focus on Your Work

Don't concern yourself with your coworkers' productivity unless their job is directly affecting yours.

16. Remember You're Not the Boss

Don't try to take charge of others when it's not your right or responsibility.

17. Don't Discuss Pay

Pay is a very personal matter and varies among employees depending on their experience and position. It is best to keep it to yourself to avoid jealousy or competition.

18. Don't Do Personal Chores on Company Time

This will create animosity among your coworkers.

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"We can help you manage your people and unlock all the secrets of business mastery. Call us today at 732-513-8601 to find out how ServiceKey can help you!"
–Mike Agugliaro and Rob Zadotti