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7 COMMON SENSE TIPS FOR MANAGING PEOPLE

“Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.”

Albert Schweitzer

1. You set the standard: Work as hard, or harder, than your employees. Be a role model when managing people. Strive to know more than your best employee (or best sales rep) about your product line, industry, and their jobs. This doesn't mean you have to know everything. Still, educate yourself. I frequently hear in my seminars, “My boss has no idea what I really do in my job. The challenges, the pressures I face, and the time constraints.”

2. Be an effective communicator: Communicate the good, the bad, and the ugly at least weekly. In study after study, employees and business leaders overwhelmingly want a leader who is “straightforward.” I hear this over and over in my leadership seminars and workshops worldwide. Good interpersonal skills are crucial in managing people.

3. Be authentic, be real: The #1 trait people want to see, to willingly follow their leader is honesty. How can you expect them to look up to you if they don't trust you? Leadership is about honesty and integrity.

4. The top five things: Ask your people point blank, “What are the top five things I can do to help you succeed?” For example, if they are salespeople, what can you do to motivate them to be out in the field instead of in the office?

5. MBWA: Management by walking around. Be accessible to them. Get in the trenches with your team. Nothing will gain respect for you more than that. This is another trait I consistently hear from my participants that they want to see in their leaders, their management team.

6. Be willing to fight for them: But before that, set the standard so they know how far they can push something before they ask for it. And when is enough...enough.

7. Get the facts first, listen: Never question their integrity without first gathering all the data. Have an open mind. Let them tell their side of the story. Just because you acknowledge what they say doesn't mean you have to agree.

The leadership tips on managing people represents the opinions of a large cross section of employees, most of whom are managers themselves. In presenting approximately 100 programs a year worldwide, these are the top seven “common sense” traits I hear employees most want from their managers. I refer to them as common-sense as it seems most leaders would know how important these people skills are to possess. Yet, many in management have risen in the ranks due only to their “hard skills” or technical skills. Many managers are promoted to management positions without any formal training in the area of communication and managing people. As a result, they can be too overbearing, or just the opposite, non-confrontational.

If nothing else, develop your communication and conflict-resolution skills. It'll save you money in the long run. As a manager, it's imperative to know how to manage people. The courts are filled with hotheads, people who said the wrong thing at the wrong time. Or worse, said nothing at all, and enabled the behavior of a difficult employee until it reached a crisis point.

“Sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.”

G.D. Boardman

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