

5 Things Successful Managers Do Differently

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A Gallup poll of more than 1 million employed U.S. workers concluded that the No. 1 reason people quit their jobs is a bad boss or immediate supervisor. With that, those who manage others might do well to pay attention, as tough as it may be to swallow. There is good news. Like anything, being a manager can be less complicated, extremely productive and even innovative, if one is willing.

Of course managers must plan, set goals, set the direction of the ship and steer it with the upmost integrity and fortitude. That is a given, but what can managers do that sets them apart and impresses upon their associates that real commitment exists?

#1: Do Unto You before You Do Unto Others

People in companies large and small are often great at “what they do” but have no real education, training or experience in managing others. Truth is, it’s an art and a skill that can be acquired through knowledge and articulated practice, but isn’t something one automatically knows how to do. No shame, no blame. To be a good coach, it’s critical to know proper approaches and how to implement them.

A Different Approach...

Be willing to say “I don’t know how to do this.” Find a professional that can help change your techniques and understand artful and productive management strategies. Be willing to adjust old habits and increase skills. Employees will notice and respect your willingness to work on YOU. The investment can help bypass years of employee issues and reduce attrition, (people leaving your organization). Less attrition equates to positive dollars saved by the organization. It’s like placing the oxygen mask on yourself, then helping others.

#2: Intentionally Select and Nurture Your Team

We’ve all read *Good to Great*, or at least heard the concept of getting the right person in the right seat on the bus. It is easy to agree that’s a good first step. The trick is not to limit future growth of the associate or stifle potential innovation for the organization.

A Different Approach...

Look for team members that are multi-dimensional. What can they contribute today and in the future? How will YOU inspire them to look deeper within themselves and unveil the hidden talents that are sure to exist? Give people a chance to do things that are outside the job description. Who knows, they may be quite successful!

#3: Invest in Structure and Tools

Seems obvious, but let's not take it for granted. Operational structure is "how you do what you do" and one of the most misunderstood concepts of business and people management. Over the years, it's been watered down, misused, and ignored. It is often left up to associates to create but rarely a focus of committed and deliberate design, which requires skill sets that many people don't have.

A Different Approach...

Investing in well-designed structures, processes and documentation is an asset to the company and to the team. To ask associates to participate in building the structure is great, but to leave it up to them puts tremendous pressure on their ability to even know what to do. It often creates animosity toward management, leaving associates once again to question your commitment. Removing obstacles to make smoother avenues to productivity within the organization is one of the most important managerial tasks.

#4: Empower Your Team

The word empowerment has been more used than fully understood. One great definition says "Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes." Note: "increasing the capacity of individuals..." This is the differentiator. It's not beneficial or advisable to empower associates unless skills, abilities and capacities to make productive decisions are also built.

A Different Approach...

Work with your associates (and perhaps a professional) to evaluate current knowledge and skill sets. Offer training, education and other resources to fill in gaps. Ask yourself, "Does

everyone in my organization consider themselves a leader, or only those in positional leadership functions?"

Slow down long enough to build a self-directed, problem-solving, decision-making team that can utilize interpersonal skills such as self management and communication to produce excellent results. It's the manager's job to set the boundaries and expectations. People can be accountable when they know the parameters.

#5: Be Engaged

It's amazing when business owners/managers say things like, "My people run things, which leaves me free to..." While it may sound good at a networking event, in reality there are few businesses that can run effectively without oversight and input from the owner/manager.

A Different Approach...

All business is dependent on relationships. Internal relationships (good or bad) create the foundation for business continuity. Relationships impact (positively or negatively) customer and client rapport. Actively seek relationships with your associates. Show them what commitment looks like, because actions speak louder than words.

In all of this, understand that good management starts and ends with your willingness to adopt, adapt and adjust. Appreciate where you are in your journey and understand there is always more to learn.