

## **Ten Mistakes Managers Make Managing**

### **Fail to get to know employees as people:**

Developing a relationship with reporting employees is a key factor in managing. You don't want to be your employees' divorce counselor or therapist, but you do want to know what's happening in their lives. When you know where the employee is going on vacation or that his kids play soccer, you are taking a healthy interest in your employees' lives. Knowing that the dog died, expressing sympathy, or that her daughter won a coveted award at school make you an interested, involved boss. Knowing employees will make you a better manager, a manager who is more responsive to employee needs, moods, and life cycle events.

### **Fail to provide clear direction:**

Managers fail to create standards and give people clear expectations so they know what they are supposed to do, and wonder why they fail. If you make every task a priority, people will soon believe that there are no priorities. More importantly, they will never feel as if they have accomplished a complete task or goal.

Within your clear expectations, if you are either too rigid or too flexible, your reporting employees will feel rudderless. You need to achieve an appropriate balance that allows you to lead employees and provide direction without dictating and destroying employee empowerment and employee engagement.

### **Fail to trust:**

When managers don't trust people to do their jobs, this lack of trust plays out in a number of injurious ways. Micromanaging is one example. Constant checking up is another. Treat people as if they are untrustworthy - watch them, track them, admonish them for every slight failing - because a few people are untrustworthy. Are you familiar with the old tenet that people live up to your expectations?

### **Fail to listen to and help employees feel that their opinions are valued.**

Active listening is a critical management skill. You can train managers in listening skills but if the manager believes that listening is a way to demonstrate that he or she values people, training is usually unnecessary. Listening is providing recognition and demonstrating your values in action. When employees feel heard out and listened to, they feel important and respected. You will have much more information when you daily open the flood gates.

### **Make decisions and then ask people for their input as if their feedback mattered.**

You can fool some of the people. but your best employees soon get the nature of your game and drop out. Along the same lines, create hierarchical permission steps and other roadblocks that teach people quickly that their ideas are subject to veto and wonder why no one has any suggestions for improvement. Enabling people to make decisions about their work is the heart of employee empowerment and the soul of employee engagement. Don't throttle them.

### **Fail to react to problems and issues that will soon fester if ignored.**

Managers have a habit of hoping that an uncomfortable issue, employee conflict or disagreement will just go away on its own if they don't provoke it or try to resolve it. Trust me. It won't. Issues, especially among people, just get worse unless something in the mix changes. Proactive intervention from the manager to coach and mentor, or to make sure employees have the skills necessary to resolve the issue, is imperative. Drama and hysteria do interrupt productivity, motivation, and employee engagement.

### **Trying to be friends with employees who report to you.**

You can develop warm and supportive relationships with employees who report to you. But, you will have difficulty separating the reporting relationship in a friendship. Friends gossip, go out together, and complain about work and the boss. There is no room for their manager in these kinds of relationships.

### **Fail to communicate effectively and withhold important information.**

The best communication is transparent communication. Sure, some information is company confidential. You may have been asked to keep certain information under wraps for awhile, but aside from these rare occasions, share what you know.

Being a member of the in-crowd is a goal for most employees and the in-crowd has information - all of the information needed to make good decisions. Ask for feedback, too. Ask people for their opinions, ideas, and continuous improvement suggestions, and if you fail to implement their suggestions, let them know why, or empower them to implement their ideas themselves.

### **Not treating all employees equally.**

You don't necessarily have to treat every employee the same, but they must feel as if they receive equal treatment. The perception that you have pet employees or that you play favorites will undermine your efforts to manage people. This goes hand-in-hand with why befriending reporting employees is a bad idea. Employees who are not in your inner circle will always believe that you favor the employees who are - whether you do or not. This perception destroys teamwork and undermines productivity and success.

### **Throw employees under the bus.**

Rather than taking responsibility for what goes wrong in the areas that you manage, blame particular employees when asked or confronted by executive leadership. When you know the responsibility is ultimately yours if you are the boss, why not act with dignity and protect your employees? When you blame employees, you look like an idiot and your employees will disrespect and hate you.

Trust me. They will find out and they will never trust you again. They'll always be waiting for the other shoe to fall. Worst? They'll tell all of their employee friends about what you did. Your other staff members will then distrust you, too. Your senior managers will not respect you either. They will question whether you are capable of doing the job and leading the team. When you throw your employees under the bus, you jeopardize your career - not theirs. And, it won't remove one iota of the blame from your shoulders.

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