

Catching the Wave

by Dr. Liz Stewart

We Need More Management

Over the past twenty years or so, "micromanagement" has become the buzzword for how not to manage. The problem is that it has been replaced with not managing enough. We need to revert to hands-on, results-based management strategies in order to develop the competent workforce necessary to achieve financial bottom-line company results. When we assess a company's human resource issues, here are two of the biggest problems we encounter:

- Managers want to be seen as the "nice guy" who is liked by their subordinates and is concerned about not being seen as a micromanager. They are prone to maintaining a hands-off relationship with staff while saying it is because they want them to become self-sustaining and independent. Unfortunately, the hands-off approach does not automatically mean employees can be independent.
- Employees want more from their managers; they want leadership, guidance, rules, coaching, clearer goals, and more recognition. In short, they want someone to set goals, establish parameters, and provide a safety net if they need help or advice.

Here are the seven basic management principles every manager should use as the foundation for his/her management style:

1. A clearly articulated set of goals and strategies based on the company's strategic plan. Everyone in a company should know what the company's direction is – the "big picture." If this big picture is fuzzy, the individual outcomes will be also.
2. A keen awareness of how to translate the organization's mission and vision into terms that relate directly to the individual employee's job.
3. A clear statement of each person's duties and outcomes articulated in their job description.
4. Explicit expectations for outcomes that are based on measurable goals and timelines as well as processes. It's important to remember that how an employee does something is as important as what they do.
5. Frequent feedback that is honest and real-time. Every employee deserves to know where they stand at any given point in time.

6. A detailed performance evaluation should be routinely provided at least every quarter. Certainly a benchmark of fairness is to give every employee ample opportunity to improve before the results are used to measure his value to the company.
7. A clear sense of rewards and recognition available to all who produce results. These have to be fair and consistently provided. Consistency is one of the most valued attributes of a successful manager.

We have found that less than 12% of managers use all seven of the basics every week. In fact, more than 70% of managers do not provide assessments quarterly and 40% do not provide them annually. Since these numbers are staggering, what is the fallout for companies? Three critical issues arise:

1. Delegation is impacted. Without a plan, a set of priorities and feedback, work is performed haphazardly.
2. Communication suffers. If we show employees that it is not necessary to listen to management, what would make them tune in when we say something “important”?
3. Human Resource issues abound. Recruitment and retention are impacted when employees don’t see the purpose of their work or their own future within the company. Morale suffers and loyalty cannot be developed if there is no basis of trust or a sense of ownership in the value of results.

Overall, employees will soon feel their careers have derailed and will seek a new job. When managers tell me they don’t have time to implement these seven principles, my response is they don’t have time not to. If you can’t delegate, you can get hopelessly entangled in the details. When managers become workers, no one is managing. And that’s what today’s workers say they are missing the most. Sadly, the best employees often say this in their exit interviews. Here is what employees say they really want from their employer:

1. To understand why they are performing their work
2. To know who is really in charge; who to go to for help, answers, and guidance
3. To be aware of the exact expectations and measures for their work
4. To be treated fairly
5. To know how their skill sets and careers will be developed. (This is especially important to the younger workers.)

The seven basic management principles address all the employee needs as well as the company needs. Now is the time to pay attention to all employees. No matter what is happening with the economy, it is always a good time to invest in the development of managers. Every dollar spent grooming and training management has a payback based on:

- Effective recruitment.
- Improved retention.
- Increased productivity
- Improved bottom-line financial results.

Today's managers need support through training that stresses management skills necessary for today's workplace:

- One on one assessment and coaching to help them become a management team
- Accountability through the communication of expectations
- The monitoring of workflows
- The consistent evaluation of individual employee performance

The bottom line: it's fine to remove the "micro" from management but we need to put the "management" back in the workplace.



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