



## **Beth's Three Tips on Becoming an Empowering Manager**

Share your leadership vision with your employees and help them to know they are an integral part of the organization. Accomplish this by communicating the mission and strategic plans of your organization and how their job fits into the overall picture. Without an understanding of the whole picture, it is impossible for an individual to accomplish their job while maintaining the overall goals of the organization. A mission that is developed at the highest level of the organization is reduced to mere words on a wall if not integrated into all organizational communication.

Secondly, make sure your people have all the information they need to accomplish their tasks and make decisions. Reina and Reina (2006) have found that an important behavior that contributes to communication trust in organizations is the sharing of information. Do you provide information willingly to others? Do workers have a view of the big picture or only information regarding their specific job? Often managers withhold information so employees do not become fearful, yet when employees do not have accurate information, they fill in the blanks and it is usually worse than the truth. This can cause increased stress, needless worry and distrust. Often managers believe they are distributing information and communication channels are open. A communication audit in a Fortune 500 company indicated there was a disconnect between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> level managers and communication was not getting to the floor. Resolving this issue allowed individuals at all levels of the organization to make informed decisions. Managing information can be a challenge to a leader, and determining what information is necessary can be difficult. Trust is improved, however, if leaders take time to clarify that they are sharing what information they are able to share.

### **Demonstrate Your Value Your Employees:**

Feeling valued by your supervisor is the key to high employee morale and productivity. As the supervisor, you can choose to focus your attention on elements that have a profound impact on the employee's life at work. The way you start the day with employees has a lot to do with setting the tone for the day. Do you greet employees? Do they understand their role? Do you share your goals and expectations for the day? Many times a supervisor thinks they have clearly stated the objectives of a job only to find that the end result misses the mark. Using clarifying questions is helpful to clear up misunderstanding and ensure that clear communication has taken place. In addition, checking with employees regarding the status of a project can realign an assignment that is not being done as required, and save time and frustration. Feedback given in a way that starts with positive remarks is often seen as more acceptable by the employee.

Spending a few minutes focusing your workforce can help to inspire collaboration between them. A short meeting called a huddle, can get your employees focused as a



team and is well worth the investment. This is an excellent time to discuss successes and challenges facing your people. It is also a good occasion to hand out Kudos for jobs your team has done well. Bringing employees together also gives them an opportunity to communicate any concerns they may be facing. When employees believe they can trust you to hear their communication, they learn they can share problems with you instead of hiding situations that can create massive problems for the organization.

With all the stress in today's workplace, it is often easier to center your attention on problems, then to focus on what people are doing right. Simple phrases like, "Please," "Thank-you," and "Nice job," can reinforce behavior you would like employees to repeat. In addition, are you sincere in your communication with your people? Are you concerned with them as human beings? Do you offer support and resources if an employee is faced with personal challenges?

When processes fail in the workplace, often a feeling of mistrust begins to pervade the environment and influences the perception of subsequent changes. Changes begin to be seen as the "flavor of the month," and are not taken seriously. Many of these problems can be alleviated with open and honest communication.

### **Give People Authority to Accomplish their Work**

How often do people have the responsibility for a project and not the authority to carry it out? As a manager, it is important that you develop a workforce that can function with or without you. Jim Collins, in "Good to Great," found that leaders of high performing companies channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the goal of building a great company. In other companies, the leader made the success of the organization dependent on them, so the company did not sustain its growth once the executive left. Collins found most "level 5" leaders wanted to see the company even more successful in the next generation with little acknowledgement that they were the foundation of that growth.

Likewise, employees will not grow and develop unless they are challenged. Do you ever hear yourself saying, "It's easier to do it myself," or "No one understands all of the parts of the project as well as I do." Delegation is the key to challenging your people. Once your people understand the overall vision and mission of the organization, the next step is to help them learn. Specific steps and communication can make delegation easier. First, determine who has the skills and background to work on a project. A person will seldom have all the skills it takes, but if they learn quickly and are motivated, they will become skilled at what they need. Next, give the person an overview of the task and define their responsibilities. Determine objectives and deadlines and set up meetings to ensure the project is on target. This does not mean micromanaging the project, but being available to answer questions and discuss progress. Encourage the employee to



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work independently and make their own decisions. There is more than one way to accomplish a task so it is important that you stand back and allow them to come up with their own solution, as long as it meets the objectives of the project. Periodically check on the progress and provide feedback when helpful. Finally, give public recognition for a job well done.

When employees feel valued they are productive. Utilizing supportive communication with top and middle managers responsible for the communication is most effective. The communication should reinforce the strategic objectives to all employees and should be consistent. Make employee communication a core function of your organization and the payback will be astronomical in terms of motivation and productivity.