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Lessons in Leadership

By Monica L. Wofford



Leadership Lesson: Work 'WITH' not 'FOR'

There is a prevalent belief that employees work *FOR* managers, as well as working *FOR* the company that pays both of your paychecks (“I work for so and so,” or “she works for me over in accounting”). Whether said in jest or with even a grain of sincerity, the phrases, “you work for me” and “my employees” and “I work for XYZ company” are very simply not true.

Employees do not, in most cases, complete work, meet deadlines, stay late, work overtime, go the extra mile for the customer, or help you with a last-minute crisis for the purpose of making your day, as the manager, or for spending those extra few moments of quality time with you ... no matter how nice a person you are or how much fun you are to hang out with.

It is not *FOR* you that employees work, nor is it always for money, but rather for what that money can provide. In truth, none of us works for anyone other than ourselves, and thus we all work *WITH* each other. The sooner you are able to recognize this, verbalize this, and begin to work *WITH* the employees that you manage, the sooner they will work with you.

“Recognition for a job well done is the top motivator of employee performance over both the short term AND the long term. Or do you still think the big motivator is money? It can be for the short term, but in the long term, it hardly ranks as one of the top five.”

Leadership Lesson: SMART Goals

One method for goal setting that has proved very successful (for both professional and personal goals) is the SMART method. For those who report to you and for yourself, the SMART method allows you to remember to make goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Recorded, and Timed. Ask each employee to share with you in writing (Recorded) one professional and one personal goal that outlines exactly (Specific) what he or she wants to achieve, have, reach, be, or attain over the next quarter, half year, or year. Each goal is then written with a timeline (Timed) and stored in the employee's file.

Your first look at each goal should seek out measurability.

How will the team and the goal setter know when to celebrate? (Measurable) Is it a goal that is probable, or even possible? (Attainable) If the goal setter has declared a desire to gain a promotion, reinforce the ambition, as this is certainly possible, and then focus on a feasible time frame for that person. However, if the goal setter declares that he or she would like to remodel the office and begin knocking down walls during budget cutbacks — well, you get the idea. The important thing is to set the goal setter, and yourself, up for success in reaching his or her goal.

For both you and the employees you work with, or who report to you, setting SMART goals can open the door for a regular conversation about progress, will point you in the direction of success, and will increase your chances of achieving those goals most important to you.

Leadership Lesson: Delegation does not mean do it for someone else when you are tired of waiting!

“Delegation is choosing to let someone else grow, increase what they know, and let you be the one they show.”

Are there any card-carrying members of the control freak club out there? If so, listen up! For a control freak, *delegation* is almost a dirty word. Yet, if you decide not to delegate, by choice or by default, you are robbing those who report to you of valuable opportunities to grow and learn from your experience. Even your co-workers and fellow club members in your volunteer organizations will benefit from mutual delegation that forms a win-win result.

But, how do you do it? How do you delegate without micromanaging and without just dumping the workload in the lap of an innocent bystander? The key is to care about the growth of others even more than they care about it themselves. If you are, instead, focused on how you can achieve a lighter workload, then you are not delegating, you are shirking responsibilities. If you are telling someone what to do and how to do it and allowing for no other options, then chances are you aren't delegating there either. You might be dictating or micromanaging, but delegation is different.

When you delegate, remember the following:

1. Be clear about your expectations. Share, beforehand, with the recipient of this new task just what your

Continued on Page 18

desire is for the date for completion, the quantity of completion (if applicable), and the quality that is expected upon completion.

2. Describe what the end result will look like. Once you have done that, then let the person reach that end result in whatever way works for him or her, thus utilizing the natural gifts, skills, talents, and abilities of this person.

3. Allow for mistakes that likely will occur and can be learned from. Mistakes will happen, hopefully only little ones, and if you allow for them, the fact that they occur naturally will not be such a surprise. In fact, build mistakes into your budget. They are one of the best learning mechanisms, but do take extra cost and a cushion to allow for them.

4. Give the person guidance, expectations, support, and the proper resources, and then get the heck out of the way and let him or her carry out what you have so clearly delegated!

5. Celebrate the success of the end result and see if you can learn anything from how this person achieved it.

Leadership Lesson:

Be clear about your expectations, and employees will be clear in their work.

“Expectations are like wishes: You can have as many

as you like, yet without effort, neither is going to happen!”

One key to successful delegation is to clearly define and communicate your expectations. Yet just how do you convey your expectations and what should they be? We have all heard the message Keep It Simple, and I agree with the philosophy, yet is it enough? It might be, but simple is not the priority. I believe IMPACTFUL is.

The greatest managers believe that if you expect the best from people, then more often than not the best is what you get. What do you expect from the employees who report to you? Have you shared your expectations with them? Do you expect them to grow? You may be interested in the growth, but have you told them so? Do they know in what way you expect them to grow?

Resolve to share clear expectations for each person who reports to you. As this is often neglected and employees spend time wondering what is expected of them, a great many benefits come about by helping people get clear on what you expect. And, if you are the one who is not clear, then ask your leader to help you understand what he or she expects of you. It may not be as much as you think, it may be more, but it will certainly be clearer if you ask rather than assume. ■

Monica L. Wofford is a nationally acclaimed author, speaker, and trainer who inspires others to lead, rather than manage. Learn more about Monica and her book, Contagious Leadership online at www.AdvantEdgeMag.com/011 today.

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