

PERSONNEL NOTEBOOK

For Your Most Important Resource—The Human Resource

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TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS

Recommendations And Notes From The Pros

As a supervisor and manager, you are in charge of the company's most important resource, the human resource. This is not a level of work that is designed for laying back and accepting your higher level of employment as a badge. It is a dynamic responsibility requiring many skills and abilities. It is an art and a science. Good supervisors are not only the backbone of the company, but are the frontline of management.

Good solid management can be taught, but the insights and tips come with experience. Fortunately, they can be passed along from the best professionals to those willing and eager to gain an extra edge in their great responsibility.

The ideas expressed herein come from a wide variety of professionals. Some of their advice or tips will be contradictory to others. Glean those that might apply to you and hopefully one of these might help.

No. 1--Keep your eyes on the prize!

Focus!

- Hire right
- Manage efficiently
- Be responsible
- Be objective
- Hold everyone accountable for their work
- Don't be afraid of your employees
- Don't let them manage you

Make notes:

- Write down observations that seem interesting or related, analyze later
- Keep records on employee performance, job progress, work problems
- Listen to ideas

- Encourage employees to contribute, to recommend
- When employees bring a problem to you, even if you know the answer, ask them what they think, what they would do. Empower them to take control.
- Criticize in private, praise in public!

Be Objective!

Concentrate on people's skills. Are they good delegators who follow up? Then let them use delegation as their means of performing. Are they loners, do they analyze things carefully, are they hands-on controllers? Then let them do the job that way. Try to find the strength of each employee and let them accomplish their work using their strengths. Read the *Personnel Notebooks* on "People Dynamics." It shows you how to identify the management style or type of each of your employees. That will tell you what their strengths and weaknesses are. For example, once you have identified whether a person is an analytical, amiable, expressive, or driver, you can identify the strengths and weaknesses of each of these styles and assign responsibilities according to each person's strengths.

Try to imagine (and write down) what conditions would result if you (or they) did twice as good a job as normal, half as good as normal.

- Always ask for help if you need it. Don't be afraid to say you don't know.
- Have an image of a philosophy of supervision that is effective.

Wrong Philosophy:

You're on top of the pyramid and see yourself as the thinker for the group. The employees are the workers who carry out your commands.

Right Philosophy:

In reality you're a facilitator leading a group of thinkers and doers and hoping to bring out the best of them. They are the asset! You are managing the asset.

Make employees accept that responsibility and give them the freedom to exercise it.

Identify targets/goals. Assign employees to solve them. Then later, after well in place, assign employee to look for more efficiency by assigning someone to do just that!

Establish supervisor clubs with hats or jackets. Give them a budget big enough to finance a monthly lunch or administer instant awards--pizza, fast food coupons, movie and/or dinner tickets, \$25, \$50 awards.

Reward the values you want when you get them! Focus the employee's attention on the positive, but tell them of the negative.

Evaluate often! Good and bad, do it with the employee.

Try to bring employees into the fold, look for hermits, loners, lurkers, bring them into the conversation and discussion.

Seek and eliminate whenever you find it:

- Confusion
- Lack of trust
- Personality conflict
- Non-involvement
- Office politics--back stabbing
- "Busy-ness": going nowhere
- Rigid or counter productive policies
- Bureaucracy. Too much paperwork, too many processes

- Someone (like a boss) taking credit for another's ideas or performance
- A job redefined or re-written so as to make it of little value
- Give power to employees, not take it from them

Try to create a view that the job is theirs, not the company's. They actually have the authority to alter it, keeping their eye on the goal, and the purpose.

Be sure that all employees know how well they're doing.

How do you inspire or motivate people? Give them:

- Responsibility
- Trust
- Freedom to act (take the risk, turn them loose and let them go for it)
- An opportunity to work as a team member
- Praise
- Recognition
- Clear direction
- Non-intimidating communication
- Personal support (orientation, coaching, encouragement, feedback)
- Functional support (skills, training, materials)
- Communications: one to one plus company information
- Look for positive communication but don't neglect coaching and counseling regarding the wrong direction, etc.
- Maintain employees' self esteem. Do not look down on employees.
- Listen

Time Management

Learn to manage time, prioritize, delegate, eliminate the unnecessary. Don't let your day be totally controlled by phone calls and fires to put out. Most fires and phone calls do not rise to the level of priority that exceed your target, your goal.

What is the most valuable use of your time right now? Re-focus: most fires and phone calls, if left undone, do not have as serious an impact as does neglecting your target or goal. Most of those messages shouldn't be coming to you anyway. Do you have employees idle waiting for you to do something else "while it's on your mind" or because it "makes you feel good getting something done" or because it makes you feel important or needed? Stick to your goal. Let someone else feel important.

When you help someone, do it without taking the responsibility from them.

Use Measurement

Once you know where you're going, identify how you'll know when you get there. Identify how you'll know when you're halfway there. Identify how you'll know if you're making any headway at all. Use these as benchmarks. Keep your eyes on the goal.

Orient people. Coach them.

- Explain the purpose and importance of what you're giving them to do or learn.
- Explain (or discuss and decide) the process to be used.

We learn from our mistakes, but we learn far more from our successes.

Think about success. Paint the picture of success. Visualize what success is. Deal with failure, but don't focus on it. Don't constantly visualize failure. What you think about, what you visualize is what you will recognize when it comes. Don't become an expert on failure, become an expert on success!

Don't accept failure! Discuss it, redirect the person who experienced it, but don't accept it. Re-visualize success for them.

Use a buddy system. Assign an existing employee to be a guiding, helpful buddy during the first 90 days to bring the new employee along. The 15 to 30 minute daily time commitment is far

exceeded by the company gain. the saving of time looking for forms, tools and "how to do it" exchanges are invaluable.

Deal with stragglers but don't make that your full-time job. Recognize the problem and bring in one of their peers or send them to one of their peers to identify the cause and decide on a solution.

Don't base your policies, rules and procedures on the 10%-20% of your employees in trouble. Concentrate your attention and your company on the 80% doing a good job and deal with the problem employees separately. But never spend more than 5%-10% of your time focusing on the problem cases. Those few problem employees can eat up 80% of your time! Then you've failed!

Employee Integration

Once a month (or once a week if possible), take an employee from one department and assign them to another for a period of one day or one week. This breaks down the concept from the field crews that the office people are on an easy time picnic and show office people the satisfaction and reality of doing what the company does to make money. Among other advantages, it sometimes sets up a camaraderie for employees to use long afterward.

Pass out pre-printed note pads to employees. Ask them to provide comments, thoughts, recommendations, and observations whenever they have them. Review them and discuss openly. You'll be amazed what the person close to the job sees.

Recognize absenteeism. Managers all over the country agree that the number one method to use in controlling absenteeism is to recognize and comment on it. Every time! If Joe misses a Monday, when he return on Tuesday, walk by his work place and say, "We missed you around here yesterday, Joe. Is everything all right?" There are many other things you can do to deal with absenteeism, but the single most effective tool is instant recognition. Even calling them at home is highly effective. Make that first contact a positive one.

Employee Recognition

Put out a company yearbook. Put every employee's picture in it! Let everyone fill out a questionnaire about their favorite music, childhood memories, etc. Fill in the blanks as in, "What I really like about my job; the pet I'd like to have." It's an expense but the benefits and rewards are immeasurable.

Career Planning

Prepare for employees leaving. Using a career development concept, discuss openly with an employee, their future desires and long-range goals. "Where do you want to be in 5 years, 10 years." If their long-range plans do not include your company, that's okay. By assisting them in moving toward their real goal, you can also prepare for their eventual parting by having them prepare for their replacement. People stay longer, are more productive, make smoother transitions while they gain a good recommendation from you and assistance with their career plans. You might later help them find a job with a supplier or customer.

Let employees pick the employee(s) of the month. Every employee in the company selects their candidate for the month and states why. Management rewards the designated employee. This builds teamwork and camaraderie but is not for every company.

Interfacing

In some companies, management meets at a company-sponsored lunch or breakfast with rotating departments once a month. Open discussion, ideas, and concerns are included. Normally the first half of the session is only for negative or problem concerns. The last half is totally for positive comments and solutions. The company may report on company problems from customer complaints to supplier problems.

Think of yourself as a facilitator. Your job is not to do the job but to see that it gets done! Find out what obstacles are impeding or slowing down the job and get them removed. Find out what

would help the job get done and put it in place. Keep checking with the team to see if everyone is on track and needs anything to proceed. If the team is moving and in the right direction, don't stop them. Leave them alone. Keep that going. If they're not advancing, do whatever is needed to get them moving.

Management is a full-time job. In many companies management is a separate profession wherein little or no technical knowledge of the job is required. The team knows the job. Management becomes the art and science of managing the people and the process. In many companies the managers make less money than the technical people they manage.

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