

## **Performance Through People: Part 3 of 3** **Why Good Management is About People, Not Things**

Paul E. Rondeau, M.A.M., CEGDS, AAMS\*

*Mr. Rondeau is an independent writer, trainer, and consultant with over 25 years experience as a senior executive increasing organizational performance, sustainability, and financial growth. He is Founder & Chief Solutions Officer at Synapse Associates based in the Washington, DC area.*

### **LEADERSHIP**

The value of a truly exceptional leader is the way he or she treats those being led. A good leader considers it a paramount responsibility to work with others in a way that each person feels like a valued and contributing member of the team. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is the cornerstone of building solid manager-employee relationships. Someone pretty smart once said, "Good followers make good leaders." These are some of the ways you can help create good followers.

#### **Engage Your Employees to Lead Your Employees**

In professional sales, there is a saying that God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. It is actually not enough *to want to be* considerate, sympathetic, encouraging and helpful to your employees. You have to know your employees and that means being a good listener. Real communication is not as easy as it seems.

We spend most of the average waking day listening (45% listening, 30% speaking), while our brains are much more efficient processors than our mouths. The average person talks at a rate of 125 to 150 words per minute but the brain processes from 400 to 800 words a minute. Instead of making listening easier, this gap actually makes it more difficult as we intermingle "listening" with thinking about other things. (How often have you been looking straight at someone and been forced to ask, "What were you saying?")

Adding to this concentration gap is studies that show even when listening carefully, we usually only grasp 50 percent of what we hear and after two days we can only remember half of that or a measly 25 percent of the original message!

Irrespective of one's particular diversity classification or background, people talk for "the same different" reasons: to receive comfort, to vent, to persuade, to inform, or just to socialize. Focus on *understanding the person* rather than remembering only the content of the discussion. Suspend your judgment and emotions and don't interrupt. Ask questions to clarify and to confirm that you understand each other. From this point, you can show the appropriate support based on the need.

Ron Jenson put it this way in [Taking the Lead](#) (Multnomah, 1998):

*"You can do more harm with an inappropriately stated thought than you might ever have imagined. But just as a word improperly said can be destructive, a word fitly spoken can give new delights, make a plain person beautiful, heal bruises, soothe agitated tempers, and give hope to despondent souls..."*

Supporting your employees is more than a good bedside manner. Your own leadership failure may be unexpected and can seem inexcusable. In the Christian religion for example, the greatest Apostle Peter failed. He denied God not once but three times after effusive promises to the contrary. And his failure was *very* public. But, as Peter discovered, failure did not mean the end: he later became 'the rock.' Regardless of what you believe, the moral of this story can bring value to the successful manager.

And so it is that employees should also feel it will not be the end if they take risks or make mistakes that result in other than the desired result. Rather, failure can provide an opportunity to foster a mentoring relationship with each employee so that they reach their true potential.

### **Develop, Mentor, and Commit**

Evaluating a failure and using it to gain professional maturity and avoid future mistakes can be the best paradigm for good managers in developing and leading their employees.

As the wise leader Mahatma Gandhi once wrote, "Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes." Not allowing employees to take the risks necessary to be successful inhibits good ideas, motivation, and ultimately deters your own success as a manager.

Mentoring, developing, and backing your employees shows a commitment to them that engenders loyalty and increases performance. Show confidence in your employees by holding high standards but not by demanding more of them than of yourself. Training, guidance and encouragement will help them exceed their own expectations and yours.

Model integrity and professionalism by seeking and encouraging respect, not popularity. You will find that popularity is a byproduct. Admit and correct your own mistakes. Be consistent in praise or criticism with all employees. Stress team without denying individual needs. Drive a stake through the heart of personal agendas. Steven Covey, author of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, sums it up this way, "Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves."

© 2008 Paul E. Rondeau. All rights reserved. To reproduce this article, please contact the author at [per@synapseassociates.com](mailto:per@synapseassociates.com).

