

How to Meet the Challenge of Being a Good Manager

A managerial position is sought after in most companies as a badge of success – the next step in a career path. However, a manager's life can be a difficult one. Promotion brings with it more responsibility, tougher targets and the need to work with a range of people: the talented, the team players, the loner, those who handle stress well and those who don't. Just because a person made a great sales consultant is no guarantee they will make an outstanding manager. It is the people skills they bring to the role that can really make or break their ability to succeed. Management theory believes that 80% of a manager's role is to supervise people at all levels and only 20% about the technical side of the job. So, what are these essential people skills? They can be categorised into three main areas:

- Motivation
- Communication
- Assertiveness

Motivation

You need to be able to motivate yourself as well as others. The greatest motivator is not always money. Most people are motivated by feeling appreciated or that they have made a difference to their team or the organisation. Rewarding the people on your team can make a massive difference to morale. This can be as simple as a 'thank you' or 'well done'. Ask your team what motivates them, make time to find out.

Enthusiasm is also infectious. A manager who can transmit enthusiasm to a team will increase motivation. One of the ways you as a manager can stay motivated is to write down three things that have gone well each day. Focus on the positive.

Communication

This means being clear in what you say and do. Techniques range from ensuring that written information is circulated for people's opinions or taking the time to talk to someone rather than simply sending them an email.

A model of communication that has been proven to work is Listen, Evaluate, Respond.

Listen – actively listen to what is being said to you, maintain eye contact, listen to the end of the sentence and **do not interrupt**. It is important to give people your attention. Many companies take pride in their open door policy but when someone walks in their manager seems preoccupied. If you check your emails when someone is talking to you the message you send is 'I am not interested in what you are saying to me'.

Evaluate – this means analysing not just what is said but how it is said, the hidden meaning. For example, someone who is usually good with deadlines hands in a report late with a strained look on their face. Ask yourself: is there a problem that needs addressing?

Respond – Look for the good in what has been said, focus on that first and then move on to what needs to be different. For example 'I really like the way you have presented these figures, its so clear. One small point, it would be helpful to include the subsidiary figures in the next report.'

Assertiveness

Most people mistake aggression for assertiveness. Assertiveness means asking for what you want, saying how you feel and acting in a way that respects yourself and others. When someone says you are 'too assertive' what they probably mean is that you are too aggressive. Assertiveness, used correctly, can help resolve conflict in the office and ensure clear communication.