

How to manage employees, from trainees to dead wood

Each of 5 types of people needs different approach

By Rick Conlow

Q. How do I know if I should manage subordinates according to their particular behavior or my own style and principle of management?

A. Effective managers learn that different people need different management approaches. Just keep in mind that regardless of which approach you use, you must always be consistent and fair in applying company principles and procedures.

Generally, there are five types of employees and each responds best to a specific management approach.

The Trainee. Newly hired employees who have low skill and high motivation need an instructor. Managers must provide plenty of direction and training to help these employees succeed. With trainees, give them specific directions, set goals, supervise them closely, praise progress and redirect them when problems arise.

The Learner. Learners have some skill and motivation. They need specific training in some areas and motivation to continue to do their job. In the case of learners, managers must act as counselors. Listen, explain, demonstrate and give helpful suggestions. Set goals with employee involvement and give regular positive feedback.

The Workhorse. The greatest percentage of a manager's employees will be in this category – dependable and hardworking. What they need from a manager is support

and help when they're not motivated. With workhorse-type employees, managers should provide motivation. Listen and ask questions, give encouragement, show concern, be readily available, discuss progress and handle any problems quickly.

MANAGER'S ADVISER

The star. The best performer in the organization, the Star, is highly skilled with high motivation. Stars can usually do their jobs alone so managers generally should stay out of their way and interact with them as a resource, kicking around ideas. As a resource, be available if necessary, ask about goals and review results, give them awards and challenge them with new opportunities.

Dead Wood. For whatever reason, there are often employees who perform very poorly. The manager should determine first if the employee has the skills to perform the job. If not, determine if there's another job in the organization where the employee would find a better fit. If the employee just simply does not work out, the manager must let him or her go according to procedures established in the organization.

GOOD COMMUNICATION

Q. My manager told me that I need to communicate more effectively with my staff but didn't have any helpful information on how to do that. What should I do?

A. You can start improving communications by pinning down your manager to get more specific feedback;

then talk to your co-workers and try to determine, without putting them on the spot, how you can communicate more effectively. Generally, when managers need to improve communication, they can start in one of three areas.

Administrative. Make sure departmental matters are running smoothly. If there's a chance in company policy or a work schedule change, for example, let your employees know. Be sure memos go out to everyone who should receive them. Hold regular staff meetings. Make sure that everyone knows the department's goals and objectives and has input into what they are.

Listening. Managers must want to listen. Determine if you've really been listening – if you're really interested. If you're not, employees can tell. You can

learn to listen more effectively by making eye contact, using positive body language, using the person's name and paraphrasing what is being said. Rate yourself: Do you want to listen? Do you smile, nod your head and otherwise encourage the employee to talk? Do you let the employee finish what he or she is trying to say?

Run Effective Meetings. Most employees will tell you meetings are a waste of time. Most meetings ramble, get off the subject, run overtime and have little employee involvement. To improve communications right away, improve the way you lead a meeting. Make sure you have a purpose for the meeting, prepare and distribute an agenda and get the employees involved in the meeting.

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Rick Conlow, CEO/Senior Partner, and Doug Watsabaugh, COO/Senior Partner have helped companies, governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations achieve record-breaking results for more than 20 years as performance improvement experts. Their clients' achievements include double digit improvements in repeat and referral business, triple digit increases in sales, more than 50% reduction in customer complaints, 34 quality and service awards and domination in their respective markets. Rick and Doug are popular motivators and speakers, inspiring audiences with their engaging down-to-earth but down-to-business approach. They have authored more than a dozen books, including *SuperSTAR Customer Service*. This year they will publish the *SuperSTAR Leadership Model*.

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