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Management Philosophy and Style

■ ***The Best Companies, the Best Employees***

Starbucks, Nordstrom, FedEx, Toyota, 3M, Microsoft, General Electric, Intel.

What do these diverse companies have in common? Not only are they among the most successful in the world, but their management and leadership philosophies are strikingly similar. They believe that employees who feel appreciated, fulfilled, and competent are usually going to be energized, productive, and loyal. And study after study confirms and *quantifies with hard data* what these and other winning companies have found: Companies with “happy” employees are the most successful, and employees who are unhappy in their work can suck the life out of an organization.

■ ***The Best Managers Keep the Best Employees***

But what makes “happy” employees? Number one by far:

The employees’ relationship with their immediate supervisor.

This trumps even salaries and benefits. No great surprise: Monday through Friday, people often spend more waking hours with the folks at work than they do with their own families. Work environment and satisfaction have a major impact on a person’s overall quality of life. If employees have a poor relationship with their supervisor, they don’t tend to hang around long (or if they do stay, their overall performance is usually below expectations). And as we all know, every aspect of turnover is expensive:

- **Loss of productivity** for every day the position is left unfilled.
- **Advertising and recruiting costs or employment agency fees.**
- **Screening** applications and résumés.
- **Interviewing** candidates.
- **Training** new hires.

■ ***Management Synergy “1”: Make EVERYONE a Manager***

No one can know a job better than the person performing it. The world has become too complicated for one individual to have the expertise to “do it all.” If a manager is setting all the goals and micromanaging every detail, then the company is wasting a lot of experience, talent, and time. Some of the most costly blunders I’ve witnessed have been on occasions when management instituted changes without drawing on the expertise of the people who would be carrying out those changes.

Problem-solving in a vacuum is usually slower and less productive (and even arrogant). Furthermore, solutions and changes imposed from the top are often resented and resisted. In contrast, great synergy is created when managers and employees exchange ideas, pool their talents, and share the glory. (Or as my grandmother used to say, “Two heads are better than one even if they are cabbage.”) Even if a solitary individual does come up with a good solution, who is she going to high-five? It’s no fun slapping thin air!

A manager should encourage each person to think like both a ***manager and an owner***. It is critical that all employees recognize how individual performances contribute to the success of the company and how the success of the company directly benefits each employee. Managers should train employees to routinely ask themselves the essential questions:

*“If I **managed this unit**, how would I solve this problem?”*

*“If I **owned this company**, how would I solve this problem?”*

■ ***Management Synergy “2”: Make EVERYONE a Member of the Company “Family”***

Let’s face it: We humans are “pack animals” who instinctively gather in tribes, gangs, clubs, teams, clans, and families. Each member hopes to be embraced, recognized, respected, protected, admired, and even loved. In return, loyal members want to protect their territory. An astute “leader of the pack” will always keep that in mind.

Building a highly functioning work “family” requires an atmosphere of respect, trust, and good will. A talented manager gives thanks, recognition, and rewards for excellent performance and understands this approach is not only the most productive but also the most gratifying. A manager who takes credit for the work of others is neither savvy nor ethical and risks undermining the fabric of the unit and the company.

■ ***Management Questions***

A new manager should ask the critical questions listed below and develop concrete plans to address them (and seasoned managers must continually reevaluate their plans and goals).

- What are the goals, vision, and mission of the company and my unit?
- What are the goals and responsibilities of the individuals I am leading?
- What is working well—and what is not?
- Is each individual in the right role, doing what she or he is best suited for? That is, does each person have what I call the “**Four T’s**” for their current role?
 - **Training** (If not, how can I help?)
 - **Tools** (If not, how can I get them?)
 - **Temperament** and
 - **Talent** (If not, can we creatively reorganize and reassign responsibilities so that each person can give their peak performance?)
- How can I help support, challenge, and retain the top performers so that the investment the company has made in them will continue to pay dividends?
- What cross-training might be necessary to ensure uninterrupted work flow? What procedures need to be written or updated to help with this training?
- What communication strategies and practices will work best for this unit?
- How can I directly contribute to the efficiency and growth of the company by using my creativity, organizational talent, and problem-solving skills?

■ ***The Manager's "Hats"***

Sooooooooooooo, a manager plays a number of parts:

- Organizer.
- Goal-setter and goal-seeker.
- Trainer.
- Monitor-evaluator.
- Mentor and counselor.
- Owner-to-employee-to-owner liaison.
- Cheerleader . . . and on rare occasions, the manager must be what I call a "motherly drill sergeant."

These functions add up to a complex role that must be filled by an individual who is good with people **and** driven to achieve results:

- **Saving** time and money.
- **Improving** accuracy.
- **Reducing** turnover.
- And most of all, **pleasing** customers with outstanding products and services.

■ ***Managing for Success: The Bottom Line***

Not only does my management philosophy reflect the best practices of some of the most successful companies in the world, but I have applied these concepts over and over and seen the outstanding results. I would be pleased to discuss in detail how I could help your organization fulfill its vision.

■ ***Selected Bibliography***

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(Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman, Jr.).

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