

Communication

Bulletin TM for Managers & Supervisors

A fast-read source of information to help managers communicate better within and between departments, twice a month.

November 1, 2021



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9 tips to be a better manager (from in-the-trenches experts)

Tend to the small details and you'll likely get through bigger turmoil

We're confident that it's never been more difficult to be a front-line manager than it is now.

Whether you lead a team on-site, virtually or in hybrid fashion, you face unprecedented challenges. And often, the best way to get through the biggest turmoil is to attend to the smallest details.

Curated advice

That's what *The First Round Review* found when they curated advice from management experts, but not the scholarly or self-proclaimed type. These are tips from professionals on the front line who manage their people successfully (almost) every day.

Here are nine tips to manage the little things so the big things run better.

Give up ownership

Let employees own decisions once you've had a spirited debate, challenging them to think through their assumptions and consider a few outcomes. Give them space and encouragement, suggests Jan Chong, VP of Engineering at Tally. One caveat: Don't give up full power on expensive or hard-to-reverse decisions.

Be a team captain, not a head coach

Take on the role of "coordinator of priorities" rather than "the authority." This

Please see Manager ... on Page 2.

Sharpen Your Judgment

Delays on both sides lead to suit: Who's at fault

"I'm glad you finally decided to file a formal complaint," said Manager Herb Flagsome.

"I was reluctant," said employee Ashley Capone. "But I talked to my friend Gina a few times about what's been going on and she thinks my team leader crossed the line. He's been sexually harassing me for some time."

"Gina brought it to my attention right away," Herb said. "But I didn't want to put pressure on you to do something you weren't comfortable with. Now we can open an investigation ASAP."

Tables turned

Months later, Herb called Ashley to his office. "I'm a bit surprised by what we've found," he said. "Your claims seem to be unfounded, and we have

evidence you were harassing your team leader."

"Me? Are you kidding me?" Ashley questioned. "What is this – some kind of witch hunt? I finally complain. You take your good old time to investigate. Then you end up blaming me."

"We did a thorough job," Herb said. "I'll give you an opportunity to respond now. Otherwise, we'll need to take the next steps in discipline."

"The next step is I'll file a lawsuit," Ashley said. "First I'm harassed. Then you retaliate against me for filing a complaint."

From there, both sides acted quickly. The company fired Ashley for inappropriate conduct. She filed a lawsuit, alleging retaliation.

The company fought the case. Did it win?

This regular feature sharpens your thinking and helps keep both you and your firm out of trouble. It describes a real legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

Make your decision, then please turn to Page 4 for the court's ruling.

The Purpose of Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors

Communication Bulletin for Managers & Supervisors provides relevant and actionable business ideas to help managers and supervisors improve communication and increase effectiveness.

The Bulletin helps improve communication within and between departments, a major goal for most businesses seeking better performance.

All in a fast-read format, twice a month.

Manager ...

(continued from Page 1)

builds better teams that share successes and learn from failures, says Michael Papet, a database administrator at Edify Labs.

Show some vulnerability

Be human, not just the boss. Share one high – and try to focus on a team success – and one low each week.

Do it in a meeting or an email to build relationships and openness, says Sunita Mahanty, a product lead at Facebook.

Share and be interested

But don't make it all about business lows and highs. Share funny personal stories or anecdotes. They don't need to be significant or detailed, says Michelle Lee, an operations head at Subscript.

Just as important, listen when employees share personal, fun stories.

Be generous with your ideas

Be the idea generator – and be willing to pass along the great ideas to your team with the continued confidence that they'll make them even better.

This helps employees feel supported and capable, says Camille Ricketts,

a marketing head at Notion. They'll likely become more creative.

Be consistent

You can help your team succeed by setting a consistent example – be on time, follow up, close the loop, do what you promise. When you perform consistently, so will your employees, says Liz Kosinski, VP of people at Sift.

Check in religiously

Set up monthly one-on-one meetings – and don't skip – with each team member, suggests Jaleh Rezaei, a co-founder at Mutiny. Don't just review performance. Ask employees to reflect on three things that went well and three things they'd like to go differently. You might even share your 3x3 briefly.

Check the intent

When employees look for advice, feedback or an idea, ask first, "What are you looking for?" If you clarify the employee's intent behind the request, you can give the most efficient and effective feedback, says Lauren Jones, a CX associate manager at Warby Parker.

Fit in praise

Every great manager in the panel believes in genuine praise quickly after great work and accomplishments to build engagement and a positive culture.

Source: tinyurl.com/leadership511

TECH CORNER

How to wean from the screen (for a while, at least)

How many screens are around you right now?

No matter the number, it's probably *too many*.

Screen time can be productive: You likely use monitors, laptops and cellular devices to get work done.

The screen can also be addictive, time-sucking, eye-harming and antisocial.

4 tips to start

So it's important to get off the screen. Try these tips to start the wean:

- Create spaces for conversation. Even

if you can't enforce it, you might encourage people to leave screens behind when they're in the break room or team meetings.

- **Take a sabbatical.** Try to designate one day off work as a day off screens, too. If a full day seems impossible, ease into it. Take four, eight, then 12 hours off first.
- **Leave your devices behind.** Opt for walking, outdoor meetings, sans the cell phones.
- **Take your time.** New habits don't come easily. Accept that it'll take time to break bad screen habits.

Source: tinyurl.com/weanscreen511

COMMUNICATION BRIEFS

6 keys to better Zoom brainstorming

Brainstorming on a Zoom call can be a challenge.

Unfortunately, people don't share as much, get distracted or aren't engaged from the start.

Try these engagement best practices to help your team brainstorm better while working in separate spaces:

- **Set the tone.** When you share pre-meeting information, also set strategic outcomes you expect to achieve.
- **Limit attendance to six or fewer** with diverse perspectives on strategy, creativity and trends.
- **Establish rules.** One biggie: Turn on cameras. You can't brainstorm effectively if you don't see each other. Other rules might cover talk time limits, mute etiquette and app use.
- **Use virtual tools.** Google Docs and Evernote are just two that offer tools to share and park documents.
- **Remember fun.** Brainstorming is more effective when it's fun. Send coffee to participants. Ask everyone to share a brief anecdote. Laugh. Share. People need that again.
- **Plan action.** Before everyone signs off, clarify next steps, who's responsible for each and when those need to be completed.

1 more tech tip: Old trick thwarts hackers

Most people have work information – from passwords to actual documents – stored on their personal smart phones. Some carry corporate smart phones with even more important information.

And they're at the same risk of a cyberattack as computers.

To avoid the risk, try this old-school cure-all: Turn off your phone. Turn it back on. Regular reboots make it more difficult for hackers to gain access.

Source: *Associated Press*.

Real Problems, Real Solutions

Our subscribers come from a broad range of organizations, large and small. In this regular networking feature, three of them share their successes in improving workplace communication.

1 Key to hybrid work model: A guide to on-site time

The pandemic prompted us to first, work remotely, then switch to a hybrid model.

So everyone worked at home some days and in the office other days.

Sounds ideal in today's climate, but it wasn't exactly efficient at first. Employees and teams weren't as productive as we'd hoped.

That's when we realized we needed to set some guidance on what worked best on-site, in-person and what could be better done remotely.

That way, we could schedule time for the best impact.

For us, we determined brainstorming and creative sessions, plus confidential or sensitive meetings, needed to be on-site, face-to-face. Information and data sharing fit well for online meetings and remote work.

Add a social element

Knowing that, managers and teams could schedule their time appropriately. Even better, they also schedule something social and fun when they're on-site together.

Now we're as productive as ever.

(Tim Rowley, COO/CTO, People Caddie, Rosemont, IL)

2 Real success is in 10 years, so plan now

How do you know if you're a successful manager?

It's a question many leaders ask themselves. And they often measure their success against hard numbers such as goals achieved and quotas surpassed.

But I looked at it differently. I wanted to index success as a leader based on how well I built strong teams over the years.

Calling the reunion

So here's the question I ask myself: "In 10 years, if I were to suddenly go out and say, 'Hey, there's going to be a reunion,' would all of my alumni really look forward to seeing each other?"

If I – or any other manager – truly believe their employees would love to get together with their boss and teammates, then we've been successful.

Good leaders understand that people move on and find different opportunities. If they still care about where they were, you've been successful at leading them.

(Rick Song, Co-founder and CEO, Persona, shared this success in the First Round Review)

3 How – and why – we let go of the red tape

Like most companies, we had processes, protocols and approvals.

They made sense to leaders at one time. But a lot of it felt exactly like red tape to employees who wanted to get their jobs done.

Some front-line managers and employees grumbled that they'd be more efficient if they didn't need approval to plow forward. Or they'd say they could produce higher quality work if they didn't have to follow so many rules.

I had to think about it: Was it all superfluous? Hadn't I hired people I trusted – and didn't they continue to prove they were trustworthy?

They were right

So I gave it a try, and dropped the need to follow rigid rules and get timely approvals.

And guess what? They were right. If you hire right, employees will succeed without being hand-tied to rules.

(Reed Hastings, CEO, Netflix, shared this success on the Freakonomics Radio Book Club)



YOUR LEGAL COACH

Whistleblower guilty, too: Is he still protected?

Question: An employee turned in a colleague for wrongdoing. We found the whistleblower was guilty of the infractions, too. Is he still protected under whistleblower rules?

Answer: No, and I understand your hesitancy, says employment law attorney Fiona Ong, a partner at Shawe Rosenthal.

Employers can't take adverse action against employees for whistleblowing. So your first reaction might be, "We can't touch him."

But whistleblowers who participate in illegal activity aren't protected from adverse actions, Ong says, citing a recent appeals court ruling.

As long as you have convincing evidence of the infraction and take the same adverse action – for instance, termination – that you would've if the person hadn't blown a whistle, you can move forward, Ong says.

Source: tinyurl.com/whistleblower511

LIGHTER SIDE

Clown makes termination more bearable

Getting fired is tough.

That's why employees in New Zealand get to bring a support person to their "pink slip meeting." Some choose a colleague. Others bring in a family member.

But when copywriter Josh Thompson had a strong feeling his scheduled meeting would turn pink, he invited a professional clown for support.

Thompson felt bad for the people who had to deliver the bad news – and he wasn't looking forward to it, either. So he figured he'd make it fun with balloon animals and mimed crying.

A good time was had by all (which is something that has probably never been written about getting fired).

Source: RD.com

COMMUNICATION NEWS

3 strategies to avoid on-site conflict

With people back on-site, working together again, managers likely see more conflict.

In fact, 40% of leaders anticipate conflict will rise at work this year, according to the LaSalle Network Re-Entry Index.

Get ahead of common issues

So you'll want to take steps now to curtail – or even avoid – it. Try to:

Be transparent. The more employees know about the transition to the office and expectations on-site, the more likely they'll be at ease. And when they're at ease, they're less likely to spark tension. "Nothing should be

a surprise to employees," said Tom Gimbel, Founder and CEO of LaSalle Network. "It helps lower anxiety levels and gives employees ample time to ask questions and mentally prepare. Employees need time to re-acclimate.

Be candid. Nearly 60% of employees are worried about having awkward conversations along the lines of vaccinations, safety, flexibility and not wanting to return to work. And if they don't have those discussions with leaders, they'll fill the unknown with worst-case scenarios, gossip and resentment. So take the lead and talk with the group, inviting them to ask candid questions.

Source: HRMorning.com

Your employees want to quit! What to do now

Beware managers: Many of your employees might walk out the door.

More than 90% of employees are considering a job change! Nearly as many are willing to switch industries – not just employers – to get new jobs, researchers at Monster.com found.

But you might be able to keep good employees if you know why they want to leave. A third say they're just burned out. Another third say they don't see enough growth opportunities in their roles and/or company.

So try these tactics to keep employees loyal:

Aim to thrive. Employees did what was needed to get by this past year. Now they might need a nudge to feel grounded in their work again. Help them see how they individually contribute to your mission again.

Give support. Employees who don't feel supported by their employers are more stressed. Hold regular one-on-ones to check how they are and if they need resources to thrive at work.

Source: HRMorning.com

Sharpen Your Judgment – The Decision

(continued from Page 1)

No, the company lost.

The employee's attorney claimed she was a victim of sexual harassment, which the manager knew about and was obligated to investigate. Then she experienced retaliation – in the worst possible form, termination – after she filed a formal complaint.

The company's attorney argued the manager couldn't investigate a harassment claim that wasn't filed. Furthermore, when he did a thorough investigation, he found the employee was at fault. That was the reason she was let go.

The court ruled the employee's retaliation claim had merit because the timing of her termination was problematic. It was just days

after she complained about him and a hostile work environment.

Use haste and caution

This case proves timing matters. The court said employers are obligated to investigate allegations when they become aware of them. Don't wait on a formal complaint. Secondly, the company took too long to conduct its investigation. Yet, it was quick to fire the employee after a counter-allegation.

Bottom line: Investigate with haste. Terminate with caution.

(Based on *Hairston v. Wormuth*. Dramatized for effect.)

Quotes

The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.

– Dolly Parton

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.

– Albert Einstein

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