

Shifting the meaning of manager

Today, let's embrace the manager position. Author and consultant Stephen Covey says, "Begin with the end in mind." The end, or goal, of managers is to have the people who report to them performing at or above minimum standards of performance. It's an awesome responsibility, and it can be a super-satisfying career. But there is a problem with the word "manager."

Have you ever noticed this? An employee gets promoted to manager because he is a fireball of energy and productivity. Then, he becomes a chair-bound bossypants who never seems to actually do anything.

So, let's shed these myths:

- management is a desk job;
- managing others depends on wielding your superior status on the organizational chart;
- managing others involves raising your voice; and
- managers have a different set of rules than everyone else.

Now, let's adopt a new management model. Management is about helping people – in the field and in the office – to become successful in their jobs. It is about leading by example and holding to high personal and professional standards. It is about helping a person with basic capacity and willingness to meet and exceed expectations and measurable objectives. Management is about the relationships that you develop with people who are aligned with common goals.

The ideal day in the life of a manager may go



something like this:

- Start the day by greeting staff members with a "Good morning" handshake. Look in their eyes and smile.
- Check e-mail and update the calendar. Review yesterday. Celebrate what was accomplished. Move forward – maybe by delegating – what didn't get done. Respond to e-mails that need a response. Listen to or read something inspirational.
- Check in with other managers. Any late-breaking news? Weather issues? Anyone not coming in today? Update the work schedule and assign people-power. Be sure to keep the drama to a minimum by "timing out" the story; just the facts, ma'am.
- Review invoices, and visit with the team as they finish yesterday's paperwork and update their scorecards. Don't neglect to notice someone's very good day or outstanding invoice. Brag on them in front of the team. Ask them to replay a positive interaction with a customer. Notice when someone is coming off of a rough day, and

privately encourage them to "catch the next one."

- Once a week, hold a meeting that celebrates sales and good customer service. Update the financial scoreboards. Announce bonus achievers and contest winners. Role play the whole sales process, and incorporate the technical training. Have some fun together.
- First, embrace the fact that the buck stops with the manager when customers complain and employees skirmish. Decide to enjoy the opportunity to turn around a frustrating situation. It's a wonderful skill to develop.
- Notice "willingness violations." If someone is breaking the rules, take them through the disciplinary process.
- Schedule time to work on things above and beyond the day-to-day duties. If managers don't plan their time, someone else will – or it will slip through their fingers. Work on projects, and participate in meaningful meetings. Meetings are a good way to communicate. Update notes and due dates for departmental milestones.

No one is going to get everything done every day. Other stuff will come up, and managers must make sound choices.

Every day, managers must plan, execute, debrief and adjust – and do so on an even keel.

Ellen Rohr is an author and business consultant who offers systems for getting focused and organized, making money and having fun in business. Her latest book is "The Bare Bones Biz Plan." She can be reached at ellen@barebonesbiz.com.