

Supervisor/HR Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

Public Employee Benefits Alliance

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The 4 Essential Skills of a Master Manager



Some supervisors are great motivators, but lack a strategic vision. Others are experts at piecing together a team, but can't stay organized. Studies of top managers have found that it is hard to be an effective team leader without having some mastery of the following four skill sets. Review each and consider how well you are mastering each one:

1. Interpersonal skills- Neglecting the interpersonal aspect of the job can leave you hamstrung by miscommunication and substandard team performance. What to focus on:

- *Set and communicate goals.* Work with your team to define exactly what you want to achieve and precisely how you'll measure your accomplishments. Then discuss these goals with employees frequently, individually and as a team.
- *Manage projects.* Lead employees in defining objectives, the steps needed to reach them, and the resources required for each step. Then allocate and organize available resources into the best possible schedule and action plan.
- *Make fair and fast decisions.* A key part of your job is to choose between options, prioritize and otherwise decide important issues. As you do, consider the impact of each option on your team members and their ability to accomplish their work effectively.
- *Motivate team members.* Individual team members will respond to different types of rewards and recognition. Get to know them well enough that you can help each person focus on what the team needs next—and the benefits of achieving it.

2. Strategic skills- As a manager, you help shape the organization's present and future. Guide your team by consistently expressing and implementing a vision of what the organization can and should accomplish.

- *Watch for opportunities.* Front-line team leaders are often best able to recognize and capitalize on opportunities for enhancing quality, productivity and customer satisfaction. Keep your eyes and ears open for these opportunities and deploy your team to take advantage of them.
- *Relentlessly solve problems.* Spot and quickly remedy any difficulties, bottlenecks, error-prone procedures and other problems around you. Solve difficulties when you first discover them, and they'll never have a chance to grow.
- *Maintain technical superiority.* Stay current with changes, new ideas and improved methods for you and your team to do your jobs.

The 4 Essential Skills of a Master Manager *continued...*

3. Operational skills- These are the skills most commonly thought of as “supervision.” These are fundamental responsibilities:

- *Identify work to be done.* Successful managers tend to see tasks coming well before others do. Approach every task at the easiest, earliest stage you find it. Also, enlist your team’s support in identifying what’s coming next, so you can all get ready for it.
- *Plan, schedule and assign work to others.* A critical part of your success is knowing your team’s skills, talents, abilities, experience and expertise—and matching them to the needs of particular jobs.
- *Monitor the work process.* Look continuously for errors, omissions, missed assignments and other imperfections that, left alone, would limit the quality of your team’s results. Ask your team members how things are going, and encourage them to report problems as well as successes.

4. Empowering skills- Fostering your team’s skills and leadership qualities can make the difference between management struggles and successes.

- *Delegate responsibility for assigning and scheduling work.* Your team members are closer to the work, and in perfect position to know who’s best suited to certain tasks. Give them not one but several projects at once, and allow them to prioritize the list and schedule their work toward each objective.
- *Pass on more of your decisions.* Relinquish some of your direct control over how they solve problems. Offer training and encouragement to get them started, particularly if they haven’t had this freedom until now.
- *Judge employees more on what they do than how they do it.* Once you agree with your team members on what’s to be accomplished, allow them to do it the way they think best. This freedom increases their motivation to succeed, as well as their enjoyment and satisfaction in doing the work.

Source: <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/43462/the-4-essential-skills-of-a-master-manager>





Strengthen Supervisor-Employee Relationships to Reduce Turnover

In his book, “Rethinking Retention in Good Times and Bad; Breakthrough Ideas for Keeping Your Best Workers,” employee retention expert Richard Finnegan says that supervisor – employee relationships are unique levers that deeply impact employee stay/leave decisions. In addition, Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, the authors of “First Break All the Rules; What the World’s Greatest Managers Do Differently” say that how long individual employees stay with an organization and how productive they are while they are there is determined by their relationship with their immediate manager or supervisor.

Focus on Interpersonal Skills Training to Improve Supervisor Relationship Skills

One specific strategy for improving supervisor – employee relationships is to provide an array of interpersonal skills training courses for your organization’s managers and supervisors. Often times individuals are promoted into supervisory positions because of their expertise in the technical aspects of their job, but they may be lacking in skill areas important to people management such as empathic listening, conflict resolution, and coaching. Supervisors with strong interpersonal skills such as these have the ability to more effectively motivate their teams, and maximize the retention of their best employees.

Partner with Your EAP to Provide the Supervisor Training

In addition to the topics mentioned above, Deer Oaks offers many courses designed to enhance supervisor interpersonal skills including the following:

- *Diversity in the Workplace: Maintaining an Inclusive Environment*
- *Leadership Essentials*
- *Managing Difficult Personalities*
- *Strengthening the Team: Building a Cohesive and Inclusive Team*
- *Communication Skills for Collaboration and Working Effectively with Others*
- *Coaching for Performance*

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Ask Your EAP!

The following are answers to common questions supervisors have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. As always, if you have specific questions about referring an employee or managing a workgroup issue, feel free to make a confidential call to the EAP for a management consultation.

Q. What are the best ways to help employees feel appreciated and motivated if there is no extra money to improve pay? Unfortunately, I need every employee to pull their weight, even if we don't have one extra dime.

A. More money would not have a lasting impact, but the following will: 1) Periodically, praise an employee in front of others, especially if the audience includes people the employee looks up to or feels are important. 2) Keep the employee out of the dark and included or involved in organizational matters that concern his or her job. 3) Keep your eyes open for things the employee does well and make a positive comment about it. (This is called "catching the employee doing something right."). Use the same moment to ask your employee how things are going, and whether he or she needs anything from you to do their job. 4) Give an assignment or project that by its nature shows that you trust the employee with something important or significant. These four strategies will add significant job satisfaction in most instances.



Q. We hear a lot about how much employees experience anxiety because of work demands, technology, resource constraints, and our culture. Supervisors aren't experts on anxiety, but what can we do to help?

A. Anxiety encompasses an array of mental health conditions, but supervisors are most likely to encounter mixed mild depression and anxiety disorders that, although distressing, aren't rigid conditions requiring long-term treatment. These include employees who are worried, fearful of their future, facing domestic work-life and caregiver challenges, financial stress, and the effects of poor sleep, strain in personal relationships, and the ability to concentrate at work. Dependability issues may exist. You may see low mood, sadness, and hear about poor sleep and appetite. You witness fits of irritability, poor concentration, and forgetfulness. Headaches may be common and aches and pains may be voiced. Heart palpitations, restlessness, and being keyed up" and "on edge" may also be problems. As these emerge, encourage use of the EAP. Always talk up confidentiality, and forget trying to talk employees out of anxiety. It doesn't work.

Q. I have a personality clash with my employee. I am trying to practice detaching emotionally, but I think supervisors must be careful with personality clashes. I can see how tempting it is to show bias against such persons on the job.

A. Not every supervisor will enjoy the personality style of each employee. You are right about the need to be cautious and avoid something called "social undermining." This refers to any behavior or attitude toward your employee with the goal of sabotaging and curtailing a person from advancing, achieving, or being recognized for what they accomplish. Social undermining is not necessarily bullying. It may be completely covert. Hindering success is the distinguishing feature of the behavior. Use the EAP to objectively assess your attitude. You may discover that certain elements of your employee's work style or personality create anxiety for you. This may be attributed to feelings like envy, jealousy, fear, and perhaps disappointment in your own achievements. These sorts of issues are usually quickly overcome with short-term counseling. The EAP is an excellent resource for such a purpose.

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