

Bad Management 101 – How to Get the Worst Out of Your Workers, and Lose Talent

By Roy Altman

As practitioners of Human Resources, we are constantly on the lookout for technology, trends, and methodologies that help us better attract, retain and develop talent to achieve our company's mission. Still, the first line is the direct manager. The manager is typically involved in the hiring process, supervises on a day-to-day basis, and is involved in the professional development aspects of the worker's career.

Unfortunately, all too often we learn about how to manage effectively by watching it done poorly. This article attempts to illustrate this by showing a how-to guide to get the worst out of your workers, and ultimately drive them away.

Expectations

Make sure that your expectations are not communicated. A senior level person should be good at guessing. A good practice is to use project plans for only some of the tasks required of a worker. Imagine the look of surprise on their faces when they discover extra tasks or hitherto unknown due dates.

Information

Less is more when it comes to information on an issue. Ensure that requirements and specifications say as little as possible. After all, the requestor likes the attention of having analysts constantly asking them to repeat themselves. Of course, this needlessly adds dependencies to the task, but it gives people the opportunity to communicate one-on-one. To make it even more fun, only divulge that precious information in little pieces. What a laugh we'll all have when the worker acts on only part of the story.

Questions

At all times you must discourage asking questions. They are a sign of ignorance, and are to be ridiculed.

Procedures

Processes should be designed to include the maximum number of steps. For the straight-line thinkers out there, Rube Goldberg Consulting has helped many organizations keep their processes convoluted just when they were at risk of becoming simple.

Documenting your procedures is not very sporting. Where's the fun if all someone needs to do to investigate a process is read the documentation? It should be more like a scavenger hunt. Imagine the thrill of finally discovering about a process. They were hard to design; they should be at least equally hard to figure out. We call this scavenger hunt "taking ownership of the issue."

In the old days, before there was a written language, or when most of the population was illiterate, history was passed down as an oral tradition. This became known as folklore. How quaint it would be to have "folkloric" business processes.

Volume of work

Now that you've laid the groundwork by having unclear expectations, poor quality information and unclear

procedures, just pile on the work and see how long it takes for the worker to break-down. Might as well let them take advantage of those health benefits.

Consistency

If you have no documented procedures, and unclear expectations, then it's real easy to be inconsistent in your application of policies. There is no better way to confuse and frustrate your workers (which is, of course, the objective) than to be constantly "moving the goalposts."

Treatment of People

Never, ever praise someone for a job well done. They're professionals; they're expected to work well. And the energy saved can be put to lambasting them when they make mistakes. And speaking of mistakes, make sure that the severity is overstated. Sure, the issues are important, but we should treat them as if it's a matter of life and death.

Why put your people in a situation that will help them succeed? Let's throw in roadblocks to ensure that they fail. If you've ever watched a hurdles race, you know how exciting it can be. Why not be excited every day? If a worker tries to point out the difficulties in doing their job, just question their "professionalism."

Inevitably, using these techniques will cause people to leave as if they were in a revolving door at a department store. But think of all the fresh new faces that will grace the workplace.

As absurd as it may seem, the above scenarios are played out every day in small businesses and large multinational corporations alike. A good manager is one who removes the obstacles for their people, and gives them every opportunity to succeed. As much as we like to employ technology, metrics and methodologies to improve the bottom line, to a large degree it comes down to basic humanity and common sense.

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