

Managerial Communication: Getting Things Done Through Others (1,178 words)

As a manager it often feels like you have a couple of hundred things to do each day. However, you can get more done, and probably done better, through others. The keys to managerial excellence is to set goals routinely, manage by meandering, delegate more effectively, and appraise performance thoroughly.

Set Goals Routinely: Goal setting is a thing of the past, the present, and the future. All time zones should be considered in effective goal setting. There are two different ways to set goals: they can be assigned by the leader, or they can be determined in collaboration between the leader and the staff member. Employee participation often creates higher goals, makes those goals more acceptable, and makes it less likely that there will be resistance to a process in which they actively participated. Also, goals need to be challenging, not too easy and not too hard, but just right. Consider the past performance and output, discuss reasonable future possibilities, and set challenging, but not impossible goals.

A great way to accomplish effective goal setting is to keep these three Q's in mind: Quickness, Quantity, and Quality. Quickness considers when are we going to start and when are we going to stop. A deadline for achievement creates a sense of urgency. Quantity considers the general objectives and activities to be done. Quantity takes in account what tasks need to be done, how tasks are to be done, and what outcomes are expected. Quality considers the level of performance expected. Quality describes the target or standard of performance to be reached with product, process, and service. One-hundred percent, defect-free, excellent versus just good enough.

Consider the past and the lessons learned, be honest about the current situation, then set challenging, yet realistic goals that get results. Goal setting will make your job easier because challenging goals set cooperatively will motivate your staff to live up to the quickness, quantity, and quality standards we can all be proud of.

Manage by Meandering: To be an effective manager, you need to connect with and interact with your staff. Work is a task event and a social event. However, when you step out of your office and interact with your staff, if not done with purpose, can feel like you are just goofing off. Be sure to be managing and not just meandering. Managing by meandering provides you with the opportunity to give positive as well as constructive feedback in a casual, non-threatening way. Managing by meandering is a valuable activity. There is a substantial body of research showing that feedback leads to increased employee performance.

Feedback tells people how well they are doing. If feedback is favorable, it acts as a positive reinforcer. If the feedback indicates inadequate performance, it may result in increased effort. When it comes to managing by meandering, you will find it to be a great tool for providing feedback, on the spot, when it will have the greatest impact. Keep in mind, if you are concerned about changing behavior, delays providing feedback on the substandard behaviors lessens the likelihood that the feedback will be effective in

bringing about the desired change. Feedback is most meaningful to the recipient when there is a very short interval between the behavior and the feedback, and that is what managing by meandering is all about. Besides, providing feedback also conveys that you care about how they are doing.

So, be sure to mingle with the masses. Go out to interact with your staff, and try managing by meandering, and give them some feedback. Have the recipient rephrase the content of your feedback to see whether it fully captures the meaning you intended. Managing by meandering is a valuable activity. This type of casual interaction will build a more positive relationship with each of your staff members and you will take the surprise out of those painful performance appraisals.

Delegate More Effectively: There are a number of good reasons to delegate. Delegation can free up some of your time, possibly improve decision making, enhance commitment, and improve relationships because it demonstrates trust. However, it needs to be done well, otherwise it could be costly in time and money.

Be sure to clarify the assignment. Make sure it is crystal clear what you are asking people to do. Carefully describe and define all the components of the task. Specify the employee's range of authority. What can they do, can't do, look at, can't look at? Allow the employee to participate in determining what they may need to be successful. Think about the relationships that will be affected, maybe you work well with someone, and they don't. Give them the communication strategies you use to be successful in that relationship. Schedule feedback loops to keep the task on schedule. Check in half way through, three-quarters of the way, and close to the deadline. Discuss problems privately, acknowledge their success publicly.

Finally, keep this in mind, when you effectively delegate a task to someone else, then you go from 60 minutes of productivity per hour to 120 minutes of productivity per hour. So, if you delegate many of your tasks to many people, you may enjoy hundreds of hours of productivity per hour. You will have your couple of hundred things to do today, done by noon, tomorrow. Consider your organization's culture concerning tolerance for risk, consider your employee's level of competence and the importance of the decision, then delegate and develop your staff.

Appraise Performance Thoroughly: Most people believe they do a good job at work. However, maybe with effective methods of appraising performance, all of your staff could be doing a great job. Hopefully, when coworkers joined our organization, they were given a detailed description of expected performance standards. It is important to provide staff with an overview of their job description, duties, responsibilities, tasks, and standards. Explain and provide examples of what they should do and how well they should do it.

Ideally, we should have quarterly informal discussions about how things are going, rather than just the annual performance review. This practice would certainly take some of the stress out of the annual review and provide opportunities to make adjustments to

guarantee outstanding performance throughout the year. That's what we want.

Here are some tips. Schedule the appraisal a few weeks in advance. Ask your staff member to do a little self-evaluation. Review the job description, the employee's file, and employee experiences. List performance problems, job successes, and future training requests. Be prepared with specific examples of positive performance behaviors and also areas that need to be improved. Always keep a positive example to share at the end the appraisal to finish on a positive note. Finally describe and discuss a future plan of action.

Take appraising performance seriously, we are talking about people's careers and livelihood. It may make the difference whether they stay and feel valued or leave and share their talents with someone else.

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