

Getting the Most out of your Employees

As a manager in a manufacturing or production environment, you probably followed the typical technical career path of most of your peers. You may have started out as a technician/engineer, progressed into some type of supervisory or group leader role and then ascended to the position of manager or director.

As a manager you probably deal more with people now than you did previously and to be an effective manager, it is important to recognize that getting the most out of your people may require different approaches on your part.

Management Fundamentals

The skills required from a technician/engineer (physical, analytical, work with their hands using various tools, technical capabilities, etc.) are quite different than that required of a manager (problem solving, resource management, analytical skills, interpersonal skills, etc.). In essence, the manager is accomplishing the organization's objectives by working through the efforts of others. Therefore interpersonal skills are, by default, important to the successful manager.

A couple of other points are important for the manager to recognize.

1. An organization has limited resources (cash, people, etc.) that it can use to accomplish its objectives.
2. An organization depends upon its managers to use its people efficiently and effectively to help it reach its goals and objectives.

So, how does manager's get the most out of the company's employees?

- Realise that people are different. It will make many of your frustrations go away plus, you will become more effective when working with others. Individuals receive, process, and express ideas, information, or solutions in a variety of ways.
- People react differently when put in a group situation. Some become quieter, while others don't know when to be quiet. Realise that extroverted behavior does not necessarily translate into better solutions. Getting introverts to speak up can be a challenge but may be well worth it.
- Compromise is sometimes the best solution. Because people are different, not everyone will agree on one solution. As a matter of fact, is there really only one answer? In the majority of situations, probably not.
- Weigh the feedback that you receive and select the solution that is best for your organization. You are in the position that gives you the best perspective. Variables that may be outside the scope of your employees' point of view may ultimately affect what you reach as a final solution.
- Time is a reality that affects solutions. Ideally one would like to think through a situation by carefully weighing the alternatives, but reality often prevents this from occurring. In a situation where quick decisions are required, apply the 80/20 rule. Gather 80% of the data and make a decision.
- Communication is critical. When you are working with others, communication is critical. No one can read your mind. Whether the communication is written or spoken, it has to occur.
- As a manager, you will probably work more extensively with individuals one on one. Each person will have strengths and weaknesses in different areas. The differences among individuals mean that managers shouldn't communicate with each employee in the same way. One style may work with one employee, while the same method has the opposite effect on another.

- Too much of one thing is not necessarily good. Although a natural reaction is to place people with similar traits together, to make things go more smoothly or make the headaches go away for you as a manager, this is not necessarily the case. Differences in people could result in deeper analysis, brainstorming and improved solutions.

Successful teams require clever managers. Managers that know how to get the most out of the people that worked for and with them. Clever managers would probably acknowledge the importance of recognizing the different personalities and skills that each player possessed.

For some, this skill of recognizing the differences and working through others come naturally, while for others it comes with a struggle. Recognize where you are on the scale and take the steps that will lead you to becoming a more successful manager. But if you don't do anything else, recognize that people are different.