A Management Guide to Creating High Performance Employees

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A Management 
Guide to Creating 
High Performance 
Employees 
FIRST EDITION

Joseph Molina
Management Course
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Levels

In order to understand how to best manage employees, supervisors must first understand the different levels of management. Each level of management comes with its own degree of authority, responsibility, and circle of influence. One level of management is senior management. Senior management creates the vision for the future of the organization and directs the organization in following that path. The main role of these managers is to envision the organization’s progress in three to ten years and decide where the organization will go. Middle level management needs to interpret the senior management’s vision and establish plans, timelines, and guidelines for the organization to follow. Their main focus is translating the information from top level managers. The day to day execution of these plans and timelines is performed by supervisors and managers. When supervisors understand the goals and objectives of the organization, they are then able to mobilize the work force and implement the timelines and guidelines set by middle level management, which are in line with the vision of the organization.

Must Level

In order for supervisors to be effective, they must have equal levels of authority and responsibility. The nightmare of management is a supervisor who has the responsibility but not the equal authority. Under these circumstances the supervisor cannot enforce and cannot complete the task he/she has been assigned by the management. Achieving balance of the two requires great communication between the supervisor and his/her boss.

Under responsibility comes accountability. Responsibility is the scope of influence for which the supervisor is held accountable. Accountability is the actual outcome or result expected from the task.

Roles

There are three major roles in the field of management. One is the interpersonal role, which is the figure head. This role is usually executed by top level managers or executives. Second
is informational, which is usually executed by middle level managers, who are tasked with interpreting and understanding the main objective of the organization. They will translate those goals and objectives to the lower level managers. The third role is positional, which is executed by the first level managers. They are in charge of making day to day decisions on what tasks need to be accomplished first.

Approach-Decisional Role

The decisional role is the first level manager or supervisor. There are two approaches for conducting the decisional role. Supervisors can utilize the coach approach, during which, the supervisor works with each employee individually. As a coach, the supervisor works closely with the employee and assists the employee with establishing goals, prioritizing objectives, evaluating results, and accessing resources. An approach that can be used by the supervisor when working with a group is the facilitator approach. In this approach, the supervisor becomes the facilitator for the group to execute day to day tasks. As a facilitator, supervisors provide access to resources for the team but do not interfere with the activities of the team. The supervisor's goal is to assist the team in becoming self sufficient. As a facilitator, supervisors provide the team with resources, guidance and support but the team executes the task.

Skills

There a certain skills that one should possess in order to be an effective supervisor. First is the conceptual skill. The conceptual skill is the supervisor's ability to understand and see the connection between the overall goal of the organization and each employee's task in relation to that goal. The greater the conceptual skill of the supervisor, the more effectively the supervisor can influence the motivation of the employee through helping the employee understand the importance of each task. Second is the human relation skill, which is the understanding of people and how people communicate. Supervisors who possess this skill are able to communicate well with employees and able translate the goals in a way the employees can understand. Third is technical skill. Under the first level management, supervisors are seen as an expert on the task they perform. For employees to respect and follow the supervisor, they must feel that the supervisor has the ability to perform the task and be able to answer any questions about the task. As supervisors advance into other roles and levels of management, the need for technical skills and knowledge of the task are not as crucial to their ability in managing employees.
Activities

In general, supervisors at different levels perform different activities. These activities include planning, organizing, managing, and controlling. Under the planning activity, supervisors should be able to plan goals and objectives for their department that correspond to the organization's goals. Planning provides the ability for supervisors to allocate the right amount of resources (i.e. time, people, etc.) and effectively execute the task. The activity of organizing is comprised of two components. The first component is organizing the task, and the second is organizing the people who will perform the task, whether it will be team projects or individual assignments. The activity of managing relates to the allocation of tasks to the employee most capable of performing those tasks. The activity of controlling refers to the supervisor's ability in controlling resources, time and deadlines to meet the organization's objectives.

Transitioning

When an employee advances into a supervisory position, there is a transition that occurs. There are three different stages of transition, all of which, dealing with communication. The three stages of transition are comprised of effective communication between the supervisor and the employee, the supervisor and upper level management, as well as the supervisor and other, equal supervisors. In addition to these stages of transition, new supervisors also need to understand the characteristics, responsibilities, and level of authority of their new position.

Taking Charge

The purpose of “taking charge” is for new supervisors to establish themselves within their new position. The first step in taking charge is to educate employees regarding the supervisors’ new position. The second step is the supervisors’ establishment of structure or routine within the group. Maintaining the current structure or routine that employees are already familiar with, will allow the new supervisor to be more readily accepted by the group. Coming into a new position and making changes right away is one of the largest mistakes that a supervisor can make, as change prior to forming a relationship tends to adversely affect employees. The third step in taking charge is for the supervisor to learn more about their individual employees. In order to develop a mutual understanding between themselves and the employees, supervisors should schedule regular sessions with each individual employee, as well as group sessions. Fourth, supervisors should consistently communicate, by informing the employees as to what is occurring at different levels of the organization. Supervisors should provide a continuous flow of information to employees, thus ensuring that employees are aware of the organization's overall goals. The fifth step in taking charge is the supervisors’ understanding of their employees’ perceptions and expectations. This understanding allows the supervisor to identify what
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...each employee perceives as important. Sixth is the supervisor’s establishment of “tone,” or the supervisor’s first impression displayed for employees. This tone determines the synergy of the relationship between the supervisor and employees. In the seventh step, supervisors should assess and alter their own work behavior prior to implementing any changes for their employees. The eighth, and final, step of taking charge includes the supervisors’ constant planning of the department’s workflow as well as clearly articulating the priorities of the tasks to the employees. This planning will instill confidence and trust in the supervisor’s employees.

Expectations

As mentioned before, in order for a task to be completed effectively, supervisors must assign the employee an equal level of authority and responsibility. In addition, supervisors also need to provide employees with a clear set of boundaries (what activities the employee is allowed to perform) and priorities (which activities the employee should perform first) in regards to the task. The task’s defined boundaries and priorities create an understanding of the supervisor’s expectations for employees.

Employees’ Expectations

There are four items that employees seek in a supervisor. The first item is trust. Employees desire a supervisor whom they can confidently trust. The second item is safety. Employees desire a supervisor who provides a safe working environment that is free of threats and harassment. The third item is support. Employees seek a supervisor who supports, either by emotional or physical means, the employees in their pursuit of accomplishing goals. The fourth item is protection. Employees desire a supervisor who advocates for and defends the employees against other departmental influences.
Creating High Performance Employees

It is important for supervisors to learn how they can create high performance employees. High performance employees are created by either the supervisor getting the right employee from the beginning or the supervisor helping the employee, once they're in the organization, to achieve his/her goals. Employees come into the organization with their own set of values, perceptions, and expectations. Therefore, in order for supervisors to connect with their employees, they must understand these values, perceptions, and goals. For supervisors to create a high performance team, they still must first understand the individual employee's values. Once managers understand these goals, they can then match the employee with the task, organization, culture and team that will allow employees to develop their full potential. Therefore, selecting the right employees from the beginning and matching those employees to the right job, task, culture and team, becomes crucial in creating high performance employees and high performance teams.

Wares

For supervisors to create high performance employees, they must also understand several other factors that can affect the employees. The first factor is the leadership style of the manager, which will influence the way employees respond and perform. The managers need to provide support to the employee through setting goals and objectives. They also provide the employee with direction, resources, and the right amount of information.

The second factor is the employees' willingness, which is their internal desire to perform the task. The value of the task, as perceived by the employee, will tend to create willingness to perform the task. The employee's willingness is the foundation that the supervisor will use to begin matching the employee with the right task. The third factor is the employee's ability. Ability relates to the employee's skill, knowledge base, and overall capacity to effectively perform the task. Both willingness and ability are directly related to the employee. These two factors are crucial for employees to take ownership of the task. The employee should not only desire to but also be capable of performing the task. A lack of either ability or willingness will create an imbalance between the employee and the task. To correct this imbalance, a supervisor needs to identify which factor is causing the issue. If the employee lacks the ability or does not have the skills to perform the task, supervisors can provide the proper training for the employee to acquire the necessary skills. If the employee lacks willingness or drive to perform the task, the
best approach is for the manager to act as a coach or leader. As a coach, the supervisor can then guide the employee to a deeper understanding of the task's value. These two factors, willingness and ability, are extremely important in creating high performance employees.

The fourth factor in creating high performance employees is the organization or “the management.” Under this factor, the employee has no direct influence on the decision making process. While some organizations will include employees in the decision making process, the company's goals and objectives will be primarily determined by top level executives, management and boards. Therefore the organization should be considered as a non-employee related or outside factor. The organization should provide the necessary resources (i.e. budget, goals, timelines, etc.) for the employees and managers to perform the task. The company should be willing to allocate time for the employees and managers to develop new skills, reward performance, and become more proficient, thus improving on the task.

The fifth factor is the environment of the situation itself, which should be favorable to the task that is going to be performed. Environment is comprised of both the organization itself as well as external influences that can affect the situation such as: industry, consumers, laws, and nature. For example, a firefighter (employee) wants to fight fires (willingness), and also has the proper equipment (support from the organization) and skill set (ability) yet there is no fire, then the environment is not allowing the employee to perform the task. Therefore, environment needs to allow for willingness, ability and support to be utilized or implemented.

Supervisors should analyze the entire situation by looking first at the environment of the situation. Once the environment has been appropriately identified, supervisors can then begin to request resources and commitment from the organization. A manager should then determine the willingness and ability levels that will best match the task at hand. With this in mind, supervisors can begin to assess the willingness and ability levels of their individual employees and thus create the best match between the employee and the task. This exemplifies that the situation needs to be addressed from the furthest factor, the environment, to the smallest detail, who will perform the task. For supervisors to create high performance employees, they need to effectively assess these five factors before attempting to accomplish each task.

Matching Employee Abilities and Desires

Abilities are the employee’s natural effectiveness in utilizing certain skills. The internal motivators of the employee include wants and desires, which are activities or tasks that the employee enjoys performing. An employee’s abilities and desires should match. There should be a balance between the abilities (what the employee is proficient in) of the individual and his/her desires (what the employee enjoys doing).

In order for managers to match the abilities and the desires of the employee, they should perform an evaluation of each employee. With a written evaluation, the employees are able to share which tasks they want to perform, which tasks they enjoy performing, as well as their overall goals and
objectives within the organization. If employees are coming into the organization simply to receive a paycheck, it will prove difficult for the manager to match the employee to the right task. This difficulty will stem from the misalignment of the employee’s goal (receiving their paycheck) and the manager’s goal (a predetermined objective). The first question managers should ask themselves is “how are they going to find out what their employees want?” Managers need to have a deeper understanding of their employees. Therefore, they should ask themselves the following questions as well: “Why do their employees work?” and “What motivates their employees to work?”

What Motivates Employees?

Many managers misunderstand the concept of what makes employees come to work. This common misconception is that the factor motivating the employee to come to work is the same factor that motivates the employee while at work. In reality, these are two different aspects of motivation.

Motivation

What motivates employees to come to work differs from what motivates employees while they are at work. Any of the following can be factors in why the employee comes to work: money, paying bills, family, paying a mortgage, maintaining a lifestyle, to save for vacation, or to save for large purchases (i.e. toys). What motivates employees at work, however, is different. What motivates employees at work has to do with the internal factors of the employees, rather than the external factors listed above. These internal factors can include any of the following: desire for recognition, sense of belonging, good communication, feeling of appreciation, or the feeling of being valued. As a manager, it is imperative to understand that it is not the actions (meetings, celebrations, parties, etc.) that motivate the employees but rather their perceptions of those actions. So, how supervisors express the aforementioned factors requires their sincerity, because it is these internal factors that influence the perceptions of the employees and act as their motivators.

Matching for Job Performance

Once supervisors understand what motivates employees, they can begin effectively and actively matching employees’ abilities and desires with the most complementary task. These factors may not match perfectly every time, but managers should exert effort to make the best match possible. Supervisors should also focus on matching the employees’ internal motivators as well as their external motivators (compensation, etc.) with the task to be performed. This is referred to as “flat-single sided” matching.
The second level of matching is referred to as “comprehensive” or “full process” matching. Aside from matching the employee’s abilities, desires, internal and external motivators with the task, managers must also ensure that the employees’ goals are in line with that of the organization/department.

When managers engage in the matching process, they should contemplate the outcomes of the task and plan for rewards. These rewards need to include a balance of both internal and external incentives, which will maintain long term employee motivation. Note: Short term motivators are external in nature, such as compensation. Long term motivators are internal in nature, such as sense of belonging, communication, and value.

Types of Employees

The basic types of employees that comprise most organizations include: part time, full time, low-skill, and high-skill employees. These different types of employees are generally motivated by different factors. Employees may be part time either by choice (i.e. they have prior family commitments that prohibit additional work) or force (i.e. the job at this time does not provide full time possibilities).

There are positive and negative aspects of each type of employee. One positive aspect of part time employees may include the employee having a lower level of stress. A negative aspect of part time employees includes the lack communication within the group due to limited daily interactions with coworkers. Positive aspects of full time employees include their ability to continually execute tasks that follow the goals of the organization, as well as their ability to understand any changes within the organization. These aspects represent that the employees have a good understanding of the organization’s mission, continuous interaction with other employees and management, and the opportunity to receive any pertinent information regarding the organization’s goals. One negative aspect of full time employees is that they may get “burned out,” or lose motivation, which can be caused by lack of progress, advancement or change in their position. Because of this negative aspect, there is greater stress on the manager to implement job rotations, advancement, and opportunities for the employees to acquire new skills. One positive aspect of low skill employees is that they are generally very efficient at performing their job. However, this work is often repetitive, creating boredom, and thus causing a higher turn-over rate in low skill employees. High skill employees have positive aspects that include their motivation regarding their skill, as well as their strong desire to improve that skill. Negatively, another aspect of high skill employees includes a lack of willingness to learn new skills.

The high skill employees are generally more attached to their skill than they are to the organization itself. The motivator for high skill employees is that the more they learn about what they do, the better they feel. These people may hold multiple types of positions, or may be employed at multiple organizations that are willing to utilize the employee’s skill. A high skill employee may be a part time or a full time employee. A part time, high skill employee may be working at different organizations, while a full time, high skill employee will, most
likely, be loyal to the organization who enhances and provides the employee with opportunity to further develop the skill.

Described below are several types of employees, including those previously mentioned, and their motivators:

Potential Leaders

The potential leader type of employee is an employee who is highly motivated, welcomes responsibility, is willing and able to motivate others, and is easy for others to follow. The main motivator for this type of employee is trust. The potential leader type of employee bases his/her motivation on the trust between him/her and the supervisor or the manager.

High Achiever

The high achiever is very similar to the potential leader type of employee, but differs in the respect that he/she is not necessarily an efficient supervisor or leader. High achievers are highly motivated, and they require little or no supervision to perform the task. High achievers take risks based on their evaluation of success. Prior to committing themselves to a task, high achievers evaluate their potential success in completing the task. Therefore, high achievers, while appearing to be capable of completing any task assigned to them, are only able to commit to tasks where they have evaluated a high potential for success. The main motivator for this type of employee is task completion.

Self Motivated

The self motivated type of employee is similar to the potential leader employee, except that they enjoy leading less. Being highly task oriented, these individuals will see what is needed and will do it. They do not need to be motivated by the supervisor, because they find their motivation from within the task itself; therefore, they require little or no supervision. Because they are self motivated, they do not enjoy being micromanaged. The main motivator for these types of employees is trust, between themselves and the manager, and independence.

Self Managed

Self managed (liberated) employees usually work well with others, and are excellent at managing their own tasks and creating their own goals and objectives. They are very similar to the self motivated, but they differ in that the self managed individual will accomplish the task by identifying the need,
setting the goals and objectives, and assuming the responsibility for the task. The main motivator for these types of individuals is trust, between themselves and the manager, and responsibility.

**High Skilled**

High skilled employees consider themselves experts. Sometimes they are difficult to manage, because they often see management as less knowledgeable than themselves. These employees may not be interested in leading. Many managers make the mistake of promoting these employees into a position of leadership, but being capable of performing the task extremely well does not necessarily indicate that they are able to provide leadership over other employees. Sometimes this type of employee is better utilized as a mentor for new employees rather than as a manager of other employees. The main motivator for this type of employee is recognition as an expert. Another motivator for this employee is education or training, which will allow them to improve their skills.

**Task/labor Motivated**

The task/labor motivated employee enjoys the task itself. They perceive their work as a natural activity. They are not very interested in leadership. Their motivation is not to learn more about the task, but simply the enjoyment of performing the task itself. Therefore, the main motivator for this type of employee is the job itself.

**Paycheck Seeker**

Paycheck seekers are typically good workers, who work hard when they know that their paycheck is secure. They may have little or no interest in increased responsibility, knowledge, or involvement with the organization. Rather than attempting to increase the paycheck seekers’ involvement within the organization, supervisors should understand that the guarantee of the paycheck is this individual’s motivation.

**Professional**

The professional employee is mostly loyal to his/her profession. It is the profession, itself, that keeps them motivated. These employees see their manager as a facilitator rather than a “boss.” They are highly motivated by professional development and learning. This type of employees’ main motivator is the development of their professional skills through the education and training provided by the organization.