

Basic Leadership Skills for Managers

While it is likely that most people involved in ministry do not think of it as a business, in fact it is a type of business. The ministry will have a pastor or missionary (the manager, boss), paid employees (associate pastor, youth pastor, office workers) and many volunteers (unpaid employees). Therefore, in order to facilitate growth and to protect itself from potential legal issues, the ministry should consider implementing basic business rules and to provide leadership skills training for its leaders. For example, the Christian Law Association (CLA) recommends that every Christian organization should have a written code of conduct that is presented to every person who works in the ministry and have everyone sign a document that shows they have received a copy.

The following paper was written by a business professional and presented to people involved with leadership. As you read the paper and see the term "business leader," think of yourself as that person in your role as pastor or missionary and when you see the term "business" think of the ministry. (DWM)

One of the troubling tendencies observed among small business leaders is their propensity to appoint people to leadership roles based solely on the fact that they have performed well in their current position. This is almost always done at a time of growth for the business or when the current leader has left and a replacement is needed *right away* or a time when there is perceived unrest among staff and you, as the business leader, have decided that you cannot or won't deal with the problems any longer. Wow, aren't these examples of when you need leadership skills the most?

If you are not familiar with The Peter Principle, here is the definition: "in a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence", meaning that employees tend to be promoted until they reach a position in which they cannot work competently.

This might sound harsh, but doesn't it sound familiar? And doesn't it also sound cruel? How many times have you promoted from within and expected someone with no leadership experience to fill a leadership role *and be successful*? Are you honestly surprised when they fail?

My issue is not with promoting from within. My issue is the leap from a front line position to a management position where the scope of expectations far exceeds the skill set of the individual. Where there is no formal training program in place and no mentor available. The name itself is often times daunting: Department Supervisor or Business Manager.

What does this all have to do with leadership skills? Leadership skills are necessary for any person in a leadership position to be successful. Too often when one of the staff is promoted, what is expected of them are *business skills* and not leadership skills. Business skills include activities like staff scheduling, data entry, inventory management, payroll, budgeting, etc.

Leadership skills include:

1. Goal setting
2. Communication
3. Listening
4. Trust
5. Accountability
6. Recognition

These are the soft skills that, when mastered, make an individual an effective leader. Anybody can learn basic business tasks like the ones mentioned above. Not everybody can master leadership skills. And yet, it's the leadership skills that truly drive business success. How?

Let's consider some fundamental concepts about what people need when it comes to job satisfaction. Is it money? Ironically, if a person believes they are paid fairly, money is never at the top of the list of job satisfiers. Dr. Maslow's research from the early 1940s showed that once a person's basic needs (money) were met, they would become increasingly aware of their psychological and social needs.

The importance of **goal setting** is to establish how each individual's daily activities contribute to the mission of the business. Everybody wants to feel like they are contributing to the big picture, that they belong to the team. If a person believes that what they do has no relevance, how can you expect them to be motivated?

Communicate to each of your staff how what they do is important and necessary to the success of everyone in the business and the business itself. If you haven't communicated your objectives and how each employee contributes to, or detracts from them, you have missed an enormous opportunity to build a high functioning team. It's the front office that is most often forgotten when it comes to communicating to them their value to the business. Remember, your people are your brand. Who do your customers interact with the most?

Why is **trust** important? It's simple. We all work better for people we trust and respect. Trust that you will give employees the information they need to do their job, trust that you will not share a confidence or engage in gossip, trust that everyone will be treated fairly, and trust that they will not be ridiculed when they acknowledge a mistake. Have you ever had a situation where a mistake was made and nobody fessed up to doing it? Perhaps it was something where it was obvious that more training was needed but you didn't know who needed the training? Or what about a piece of equipment that breaks and nobody tells you about it and you are left to discover the problem the next time you need the equipment? Everybody makes mistakes, it's how we handle them that's important. If people believe their job is in jeopardy if they make a mistake or if they don't trust their leader, you will always have an environment where no one is **accountable**.

An environment of accountability is about equilibrium. An effective leader must develop the ability to not only identify failures in performances but, more importantly, the successes. People are successful when they have been given proper instructions, clear communication about how they contribute to the business and receive regular and timely feedback....especially positive feedback.

Someone once said: "The worst mistake a boss can make is not to say 'Well done'".

Developing and cultivating strong leadership skills, those soft skills, will improve your level of success much faster than just about anything else you do. A strong leader will decrease employee turnover and improve productivity by clearly communicating expectations, holding people accountable and providing feedback and recognition.