

Hang on to your people and **TIP** your bottom line

A senior manager recently identified one of his key strengths as his ability to develop effective and productive teams. When we asked what made him an effective leader, he replied that it boiled down to four things:

- understanding the strengths that his people bring to the table;
- assigning tasks and levels of responsibility according to their strengths;
- paying attention to the employees' ideas and concerns and addressing them; and
- helping people do their jobs and making them feel proud of their accomplishments by continuously giving them the recognition, support and encouragement they need.

He gets excellent results from his teams, in short, by utilizing and supporting his people well. They make it happen; they are fulfilled in their work; they are highly productive; and they stay, instead of looking elsewhere for a better deal. The employees win, the manager wins and the company wins.

That sounds easy. Don't all managers do that? Unfortunately not, if you listen to the people who work for them ... or used to.

Hang on to your people, develop them into highly productive teams and up your bottom line. Retention and productivity go hand in hand, which all adds up to money in the bank. Be a great manager, not someone's ex-manager, by practicing these key principles:

Build a real team

Build a team that is energized, productive and results-driven. Foster a sense of belonging where members are committed to their goals. Influence behaviours and communication that is collaborative. Create a team spirit where members feel free to take risks, to communicate openly, to challenge assumptions, to raise issues or to simply ask for help. Work to connect your employees with one another so that they trust one another and want to help one another.

Establishing trust

Trust makes relationships work. Business is conducted through relationships, and trust and respect are the foundation of productive relationships that deliver results. People do their jobs best when they feel good about what they are doing. Your job is to believe in your people and show your respect by the things you do each and every day. A very important demonstration of your trust is to give your people clear direction and challenges that test their abilities, along with your confidence that they can reach and exceed the high expectations you set.

Get out of the way and let them do their work their way

Most employees hate being "micro-managed." It indicates that you don't trust them and their ability to do the job. Micro-managing will drive away your best workers. Focus on the result you desire, not on how the result is achieved. Nudge, coach, instruct and encourage, as necessary, to support them in accomplishing results in efficient ways, but don't micro-manage.

Foster two-way communication

The foundation of effective communication is to listen well. Listen to what your team members think about their work, to their concerns, and to their suggestions. Then act on them. Encourage team members to share information, exchange ideas and brainstorm solutions with one another. Supporting one another's goals and contributing to the overall performance of the team builds confidence, competence within each individual and the team as a whole. It spawns creative problem solving and builds a trust that carries the team through challenging times.

The other half of effective communication for managers is to share information with your people. Hoarding information or a reluctance to share information betrays trust. If you want your team to buy in to your goals and the organizational goals, you need to share with them what is going on in the

larger picture. Otherwise, you are demonstrating that you don't trust them. If you don't trust them, why should they trust you? Tell them what you can tell them and tell them what you cannot tell them. They will respect you for that.

Position your people so they have the best possible chance to succeed

This principle can be done in a number of ways:

Give them the right work to do: Doing the right tasks that fit their strengths and interests; work that they find meaningful, challenging and are motivated to do well; connected with the right people so that they fit well together; and in the right environment that suits how they operate best. Beyond the key ingredient of trust, the right environment provides all the support people need to do their jobs effectively.

Support: Give your team members the resources that they need to do their job – the time, budget, technology and training. And there are not budget restrictions for the encouragement, confidence and coaching that you give.

The old adage about your people being your greatest asset is true, but only if you cultivate their active engagement; help them grow their skills and use them effectively; and trust and support them in their work.

This is your role, as a leader and manager. You make a huge difference, one way or the other, depending upon your own attitude, motivation and approach. This other old adage is also true, "People don't leave jobs, they leave managers." What are you going to do hang on to your people and up your bottom line? ■



Anita Caputo and Lee Wallace are co-authors of *Learn to Bounce: from a high-tech layoff to your ideal work.* Go to www.learn tobounce.com