

Man management

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● Problems In Man Management

There is an almost unlimited number of causes of weakness in the management of staff from favouritism to rigid discipline, from lack of understanding of people and human relations to undue tolerance of the whims and idiosyncrasies of the individual.

Most causes of weakness revolve around the personality, competence and leadership qualities of the manager.

Here are some of the problems the manager may have to rectify or alleviate in order to get the best out of his staff.

1. A fear of infringing the statutory rights of workers.
2. A fear of being unpopular.
3. Lack of clearly defined objectives and of a clearly defined policy to meet those objectives, resulting in muddled thinking and lack of specific direction.
4. Lack of adequate planning.
5. Lack of involvement of staff in matters that affect them personally.
6. Lack of interest in people as individuals, in their careers, work problems and achievements.
7. Inability to communicate effectively.
8. A feeling of insecurity resulting in an aggressive attitude.
9. Failure to liaise with other managers.
10. Lack of co-ordination between departments.
11. Lack of direction from superiors.
12. Lack of support from personnel staff.
13. Inadequate resources - finance, space, equipment, supplies, etc.
14. Consciousness of status.
15. Inflexibility of ideas: unwillingness to exchange ideas, to consider and accept other people's ideas.
16. Shirking of responsibility in solving problems that arise.
17. Inadequate and/or unsatisfactory delegation.

18. Inadequate and/or unsatisfactory guidance and supervision.
19. Lack of confidence in other people to carry out tasks.
20. Lack of adequate and suitable training.
21. Inflexible rules and regulations.
22. Lack of attention to safety.
23. Lack of control of individual workloads.
24. Failure to train a subordinate as a deputy who will subsequently be able to take over when the manager moves on.
25. Failure to cover for absence of staff so that certain tasks are not completed on time.

Each manager must assess his own performance against these criteria and decide which faults are within his power to rectify and which are outside his control. By eliminating those faults that are his concern, he may well find that other faults outside his control are somewhat mitigated.

● Handling People

The secret of handling people, i.e. getting the best out of them, is understanding them as individuals. It is time-consuming, exhausting, can be frustrating and irritating, but is eminently worthwhile for both personal and organisational satisfaction.

How do you 'handle people'?

First, you must examine yourself, your personal qualities, attitudes, strengths, weaknesses, methods of approach and achievements. The person who 'believes in calling a spade a spade' may get results because he has other attributes that mitigate the effects of this blunt approach.

On the other hand, it may cause resentment, which will quickly become apparent in the deteriorating efficiency of the department if not in the hostile attitudes of individual staff. A few basic rules for getting the best out of people generally - not only staff - may be useful to the young manager.

1. Think of and talk to each person as an individual.
2. Look for each person's strengths and weaknesses and make the best use of the strengths.
3. Consider each individual's reaction to your approach and try to adapt your approach to get the best reaction.
4. Discuss topics in such a way that ideas are produced or appear to be produced by the other person. They will take a far greater interest in making ideas work if they think they have produced them.
5. Set out to create a happy atmosphere in the office, section or department. A stranger coming in should be able to feel it immediately.
6. Encourage people to 'stand on their own feet', i.e. to have confidence in their abilities, but at the same time let them know that you are willing to discuss their problems.
7. Guide people in overcoming their difficulties - do not solve their problems for them.
8. Ensure that communications are complete, accurate, timed correctly, given in the right form and clearly understood.
9. Ensure that each member of staff has a development programme, however simple.
10. Show appreciation.
11. Treat unsatisfactory work as a mutual problem to be solved together i.e. by you and your subordinate.
12. Never criticise anyone in front of other people.
13. Give instruction in the form of a request, not an order.
14. Always give deadlines for the completion of a task or part of a task, or the fulfilment of an instruction.
15. Insist on deadlines being met or an explanation being given in good time if they cannot be met.
16. 'Stretch' people a little, but do not thrust them 'out of their depth.'
17. Fulfil all promises.
18. Set standards and never criticise anyone for doing something you do yourself,

- e.g. arriving late at work.
19. Never ask anyone to do anything you have not done yourself or would not be prepared to do yourself.
 20. In times of stress, be prepared to help with menial tasks if – and only if – this will help to achieve a desired result.
 21. When delegating duties, delegate adequate authority to fulfil them and ensure that appropriate people know.
 22. Do not handle queries relating to duties that have been delegated to other people; show your confidence in them by referring the queries to the subordinate concerned.
 23. Ensure that your own knowledge and skills are as good as you can make them, but do not be afraid to make the best possible use of other people's abilities to achieve your objectives – and give credit to the people concerned.
 24. Encourage liaison with other departments.
 25. Insist on adequate induction training (including safety regulations and procedures) for all new staff and updating training for existing staff.

The value, or otherwise, of holding staff meetings has to be considered carefully. When a large number of people meet together for discussion, little is achieved as a rule. On the other hand, such a meeting does give each member of the staff an opportunity to identify with the department.

On the whole, smaller meetings of section staff, with section heads attending meetings with the office manager, are both more practicable and more worthwhile, provided there is a real reason for the meeting and it is not treated as an opportunity to air grievances.

It might also be valuable for the manager to attend the section meetings in rotation, so that he gets to know staff with whom he is not normally in contact and they get to know him. This also gives the manager an opportunity to assess individuals – knowledge which might be useful later in discussion with immediate subordinates.

● Delegation

A good basic rule for delegation is 'anything that can be done by

anyone else should not be done by me'. Far too many managers spend time doing things subordinates are paid to do. The ultimate result of this can only be that the manager has insufficient time to do what he is paid to do – think, make decisions and foresee, prevent and solve problems.

A clear organisation structure, job descriptions for all staff and a cohesive policy for meeting objectives all make delegation easier. It must be made clear that responsibility can never be delegated. The top man is always responsible for the success – or otherwise – of his department. He can, and must, delegate authority. The root of successful delegation is, of course, a happy, well-trained, adequately skilled, interested and involved staff.

The process of delegation really starts at the stage of function analysis and involves the following steps.

1. Determine what activities are involved in fulfilling each of your responsibilities.
2. Assess the approximate amount of time spent on each type of activity.
3. Decide which activities only you have the knowledge and expertise to carry out.
4. Decide which of the remaining activities subordinate staff are qualified to carry out and allocate them as duties to the appropriate people, depending on the volume and level.
5. Decide who is best qualified to carry out remaining duties, given appropriate training, and make arrangements. This can be approached either on the basis of those activities for which training can most easily be given or on the basis of the most time-consuming activities that will mean greater relief for you. It is important to set target dates for the complete handover of activities and to review progress regularly.

The steps listed above may be regarded as the general principles of delegation. The day-to-day procedures are as follows.

1. Decide who is the right person to carry out the task.
2. Decide what preliminary investigation/organisation is necessary, if any.

3. Decide what authority is needed by the person who is to carry out the task.
4. Decide what controls for monitoring progress are needed.
5. Decide what possible problems might be involved.
6. Set a deadline for completion.
7. Decide what explanation/instruction is necessary.
8. Decide whether the instruction should be given face-to-face, on the phone or in written form.
9. Allocate time for explanation and arrange with the subordinate.
10. Give the necessary explanation/instruction clearly and concisely. Make sure all information is given. Ensure the person concerned knows exactly what is expected of him.
11. Thereafter, forget the task except to check the monitoring system.
12. Keep the person informed of any changes that may affect the work in progress.

● In Conclusion

'A good department runs itself.' This statement is not really true because situations are never static and crises occur which only the manager can handle. Nevertheless, one of the basic criteria for judging the efficiency of the department is whether the level of the department's competence is the same when the manager is away as when he is there. Properly conducted delegation at all times is the secret.

Finally, ask yourself the following.

1. Under what circumstances do you work hardest?
2. When are you most enthusiastic, efficient and determined?
3. What circumstances discourage you?
4. Do you have any problems with your staff? If so, try and analyse the problems and reasons why they exist.
5. Do you have any problems with your greens committee? What are you doing to overcome these problems?

Be honest with yourself and good luck!