BESTPRACTICES

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To manage is to enable

I was extremely lucky early in my career as a manager to have a great mentor: Dr. Joseph Trickett, the head of the Santa Clara (CA) University Graduate Business School. I met him when a student of his selected our company to do an employee attitude survey and study. Trickett visited our company in person to verify this was a worthwhile project.

At the time, I was new to managing people. I knew I had some instincts for it, but I had a long way to go.

Trickett would visit our company to monitor the student's progress, and he and I would sometimes get into long conversations about managing people. His passion was understanding employee behavior. He was quite impressed a company like ours, which paid relatively low wages, could get people to work so hard and still like what they did.

One day he asked me a simple question. Why do people get a job? He followed that by asking me whether I thought newly hired employees wanted to be successful. He told me he has met managers who treat employees as though they got the job to deliberately screw up and get fired. It's treating employees this way that ends up demotivating them.

I told him I believed people want to be successful when they start their jobs. He responded that my role is to enable them to be successful.

It's such a simple thought, yet it has guided me throughout my career. I believe it is the single most important thing leading to my success: A good manager is an enabler.

For me, managing became much easier when I realized that is all there is to it. If I always asked myself, "Am I enabling the team to be successful?" I always knew what to do. If you, too, think this way, managing will be easier for you — and team success will be the result.

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10 BEST PRACTICES FOR 'ENABLING' EMPLOYEES:

1 An enabler must build a culture of coaching and mentoring.

2 An enabler must realize coaching and mentoring is not an event. They are ongoing. Many managers only give feedback during reviews. A coach coaches all of the time.

3 An enabler tries to make people's jobs easier, looking for ways to ensure they have confidence-building success.

4 An enabler leads with positive coaching, but also is firm in correcting bad or destructive habits.

5 An enabler shows the way as a good role model.

6 An enabler creates an environment that encourages team success.

7 An enabler sets high standards so team success is ensured.

8 An enabler is very good at observation and listening.

9 An enabler recognizes success in others, and shares credit for success.

10 An enabler manages the company culture.