



THE BENCHMARK

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Get the best from managers

I've had the recent pleasure of managing a client's account management team for the last six months. I love it, but managing people who are in front of your customer is tough. It takes hard work and patience. The good news is this skill can be learned and refined with experience, but there's a shortage of good management talent operating in this industry. You have to get this right. Your growth and sanity depend on it!

The best companies are making investments in finding, training, motivating and rewarding their talent. This leads to retention and stability. Profits follow. Sounds easy, right? If you're frustrated and challenged by your team's results, consider the following.

Personality profiles. Human behavior is predictable and job descriptions require certain skill sets within your organizational structure. Profiles can be used to gain insight as to how a particular individual works and interacts with others, in their personal life or working life. DISC, Myers-Briggs or Wonderlic are few good providers to check out as a measuring stick for your team. Include yourself. Owners create problems, too! This screening process is a must and you need to make it part of a strategic planning meeting and/or your hiring process. In the classic read *Good to Great* author Jim Collins talks about a simple question "great" companies ask themselves: "Do I have the right people on the bus? Are they sitting in the right seat?" Ask this question of your organization on a regular basis.

Measurable data. Accountability for managers starts with communicating specific goals and metrics that must be met and reported. Each firm has to ask: "How do we define success?" The answer will drive the setup of your standards and metrics. Frequency should include weekly, monthly and quarterly requirements, derived from an annual target. Examples include the number of property visits, revenue per hour targets, budget vs. actual hours, man count, gross profit goals, quality inspections, communication touches (emails, calls, meetings), leads, proposals and closes. You have to meet

on a regular basis to discuss and track metrics. The profile information you analyze from above should help you motivate and modify your approach with each manager. You can't treat everyone the same.

Priorities and work habits. Compensation and tenure have nothing to do with work habits and productivity. Too many owners make the mistake of believing they do. You need to help your people prioritize their time and set a weekly schedule. Your profile results on that manager will help you in your approach, but don't assume your people are productive in their daily routine. We consistently see terrible habits and priorities. This includes you owners, as well! So what's the solution? Is it micromanaging? Yes. Better systems and processes? Yes. Focus and determination? Yes. Hard work? Yes. The results here can be tremendous. You may even have to replace someone.

Observation and meetings. You have to make time to observe your people in action and meet to discuss results against goals. This includes a regularly scheduled meeting, phone calls, joint sales calls, joint inspection walks, field crews observations, etc. It can be as simple as taking a manager to lunch to get a feel for stress levels, issues at home, pulse and momentum of the team. Expect to hear concerns. That's a good thing. It allows you to get ahead of problems. I know everyone is busy, but this needs to be a priority. Be constructive in your comments, listen and then take action. Leaders need to lead.

Reward and appreciate. Employees by nature always ask "What's in it for me?" Your answer cannot always be, "Your job and a paycheck!" Get creative to recognize and reward your people. It's not always about an incentive plan, although I like them if designed and tracked correctly. Gift cards, dinner, an event or a day off can go a long way. How about a simple "thank you" in front of their peers? Or, "Job well done!" Show people you care. It might sound corny but it's real, trust me.

Incorporate these approaches into your management process. Be consistent and focus. You will get results.