

How to Be an Assertive Manager Your Employees Wanted Results For: Tips for Effective Communication

As a manager, by definition you are in the middle. You're the glue. A manager who doesn't manage is worse than no manager at all. Your employees need you to lead and manage or get out of their way.

Did you know that exceptional managers are the main reason good employees stay where they are, and bad managers are the main reason good employees leave? Author Marcus Buckingham tells us people don't quit their jobs – they quit bad managers. They quit managers who don't recognize their contributions. They quit managers who ignore slacker coworkers. They quit managers who don't provide clear direction. In other words, they quit managers who don't manage and lead assertively.

That's why your words are so important. As a manager your words matter more to your employees than anyone else's. However, if you're like most leaders (and like me), you've delayed hot button conversations because you didn't know what to say or you didn't want to rock the boat. And (like me) you've probably also initiated hot button conversations with reckless abandon and later regretted your words.

Here are some management skill training tips to help you be the assertive manager your employees want to produce results for.

1. Establish your role from the beginning

Don't: be afraid to be the boss. When you take charge, don't assume everyone will automatically fall into their roles.

Why not: In the beginning, employees aren't sure about your authority, and neither are you. It's easier to set the tone up front than to change the tone afterward.

Do: conduct a new supervisor interview and put your best foot forward. Take the initiative to set boundaries and define roles from the outset.

PowerPhrases: What to Say: "I need your help, support and feedback on my new role as your manager." "Now that I'm your manager, our roles will change. Do you have concerns about that?"

Poison Phrases: What not to say: We're all friends here. It will work out fine.

2. Hold people accountable for expected results

Don't: indulge slackers.

Why not: It's unfair to the good performers who are doing their jobs – and often picking up the slack. It encourages slacking from everyone.

Do: clarify expectations and document and address problems as they arise.

PowerPhrases: What to Say: "Your job requires that you... Instead you are... Here's why I need you to meet expectations."

Poison Phrases: What not to say: Oh well, it'll get done. It always does.

3. Create a system to consistently acknowledge good employee performance

Don't: leave acknowledgement to chance or dismiss good work as an expected part of the job.

Why not: Behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated. Behavior that is ignored drops off. If you don't have a system to acknowledge employees, it probably won't happen and you'll lose a performance enhancement opportunity.

Do: set reminders or other systems to ensure you let employees know exactly what they do that you appreciate and how it affects you in a positive way.

PowerPhrases: What to Say: "I love your attention to detail in how you... That's important because..." "...was a powerful initiative because..."

Poison Phrases: What not to say: that's what they get paid for.

4. Be clear in delegation and providing directions

Don't: assume understanding.

Why not: There are too many variables in every project to assume anything.

Do: specify deadlines, budget, specs, authority and follow-up.

PowerPhrases: What to Say: "I need ...by (when) to the following specs. Make your own decisions about X but please forward questions to me about Y. "

Poison Phrases: What not to say: I don't know what I want, but I'll know it when I see it.

5. Tie each employee responsibility into the bigger picture of company mission, vision and department goals

Don't: treat individual tasks as mundane.

Why not: mundane tasks don't motivate. Activities that are a part of a bigger mission do.

Do: remind employees continually about why you're there and how their achievements help move the mission forward.

PowerPhrases: What to Say: "This list you completed is a good step forward toward our mission of..."

Poison Phrases: So you made a list. That's what we pay you for.

6. Apply prepared assertive management phrases and leadership phrases for every step of the management process including:

The new supervisor interview

Building strong managers and leaders

How to coach employees

Meeting facilitation

Announcing change

Motivation

Providing positive feedback

Providing negative feedback

Performance review phrases

Termination

This article offers dos, don'ts, PowerPhrases and Poison Phrases for five management conversations. In the course of your management career you'll need to initiate conversations for hundreds of employee conversations. Let the experience of others guide you.

The management process is a communication process. It's not enough to be right. It's not enough to know what you're doing. It's essential that to have to words to successfully manage your employees and to be the assertive manager your employees want you to be.

About the Author

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