

Sometimes It's Better To Learn What *Not* To Do-- Just because you have the title of manager doesn't mean you know how to manage people well

“I have a certificate that says I know how to supervise people. I got it at one of those all-day seminars.” You know the kind; the one geared toward newly appointed managers or, as facilitator might say with some humor, “for long-time managers whose companies send them here before they send them out the door.”

Too often, the newly appointed manager didn’t necessarily earn this position, but volunteered for it (or was volunteered for it) after their predecessor resigned. Nonetheless, today they’re in charge of other human beings. As far as they’re concerned, as of today, they will prove to be the best manager the world has ever seen. Not. They will sometimes exemplify the mediocrity of management. Those without training and the personal abilities to lead turn out to be the “experienced” managers who have lost their zeal. They grouse about their employees and lament with anyone that will listen (including other subordinates) over trivial issues. Did you think that Scott Larsen, the creator of Dilbert had to come up with his own ideas? How about some examples?

Try to prevent your employees from going to the bathroom more than twice a day.

This is a true case (ending up in litigation) of a Supervisor who felt they could add to their productivity by limiting washroom breaks. Not only that, but specifying between which hours they were allowed to go! Do you really figure this will add to your productivity figures? Managers who try to limit trips to the restroom do so because they don't understand what it means to manage people. Somewhere along the way they became misguided and equate management with babysitting. In some instances this may be necessary, but for the most part it’s an insult to employees. Management should be about mentoring—not monitoring people.

Be a Micromanager and criticize their efforts

Be consistently critical of your Employee’s work, suggestions, and even their personality. Refuse to promote them. Do you want your employee to feel all of that negative criticism resulting in their feeling “burned out” and as unenthusiastic toward extra projects and pursuing further promotion as some sort of revenge towards you? In a recent conversation with an independent retailer, this was basically what he extolled as his management philosophy. His feeling that the staff had had a “country club” environment led him to believe this was the corrective action necessary. Wrong...over half of his staff resigned over the next four weeks!

I’m not suggesting that behind the cheerleading and empowerment effort there doesn’t need to be a plan. That’s exactly it; don’t just react out of emotion. Think about what makes sense for the short and the long term. If an employee requires discipline, take action. “Set them straight or set them free.”

### Don't include your Managers in the decision making process

A recipe for failure? Don't include them, even though you've hired them to help run your business. They're also just employees, right? I'm the boss, and my attitude can be "do the hell as I say" if I want it to be. But do expect no organization, no support, no cohesiveness, and don't expect them to know (or care) about what you want to accomplish. So they'll keep failing, and blame you for their failure.

The lesson here is, don't give people a reason to blame anybody else for their failure. It's your responsibility to support them when you hire people. You have to provide an environment you feel good about, where they can come to work and feel challenged and welcome, not just a job.

### Hire cheap and make them feel grateful they're employed

I'm in it for the money, right? I wanted to hire employees for the least amount I could and then get the most out of them I could. So it was a chess game between them and me...and that's what you'll get in return, the classic "us and them" environment. You don't have to be the highest-paying employer in your neighborhood; you can augment wages with other recognition tools (gift certificates, etc.). Low cost incentives like birthday cakes and recognition among others for a job well done will go a long way to achieving extra effort and loyalty from your staff. Amortize your payroll costs and figure out if you'll really save money in the long run by being cheap when you have a higher turnover percentage and associated training costs to lay out.

### Remind people who's the Boss (all the time)

I recently ran into a Manager who felt that in virtually every conversation with her employees, she needed to use the word "Boss". She's very much into job titles, even though some of her staff had more experience than she did. She belittled staff in front of others and was a poor example to everyone around her by her attitude and gossiping. She'd compliment a direct report on her outfit one day, and then attempt to write them up, saying the outfit was not office-appropriate! In addition, she would assign projects to individuals and then they'd find out through their peers that they were also assigned to the same project, causing uneasiness between employees. Funny, they describe her as a Boss who will "smile to your face and stab you in the back the next minute."

All of these areas add up to failure. Why not try the opposite approach? Otherwise, you'll probably find yourself profiled at [www.mybosssucks.com](http://www.mybosssucks.com).

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