

There Is No Good Way to Manage People

But We Have To Try Anyway

By Tron Jordheim

“People are people” the old saying goes. That means everyone brings their own personal baggage with them to work. People make poor choices, act rashly and defend their own comfort zones. People have agendas all their own that often have nothing to do with the work agenda that you, as the manager, are promoting.

Sometimes the selfish and petty things people do are no surprise. Some employees repeat a behavior that has been seen before many times if you let them. Infighting, jealousy, jockeying for position and defending turf are pretty normal behaviors. Sometimes the selfish and petty behavior is quite a surprise.

In contrast, every workplace has people who perform well, take care of themselves, are supportive of others on the team when needed and keep below the radar.

The best managers try hard to motivate and guide their people to meet agreed-upon goals. Procedures, protocols and guidelines are put in place to help keep things fair and organized. Feedback, motivation and direction are given. But at the end of the day, good managers realize that there is no good way to manage people.

But since managing people is the key to any business success, you have to try anyway.

There are many books on people management, and you may have practiced all the different styles. If you boil down all the great people management advice as much as you can, there are really only two things to do. One is to make sure your staff is getting ongoing training, feedback, correction and motivation for all their work-related behaviors. The other thing you can do is to leave your people alone and let them work. The trick is to know when to do which with each person.

Here are some ways you can try:

Best Practices

Try to create models of best performance and best practices for employees to learn, to copy and to aspire to. You can create goals, requirements and performance thresholds to use as measurement tools. Be fair and consistent in enforcing performance requirements and work rules and be honest with them in your assessment of business conditions, in your communication of company policies and your feelings about their performance.

Know Your People

Try to get to know each of your people so you can find the right way to approach them, motivate and correct each of them. Spend a little time with each of your direct reports and encourage them to spend time with each of their direct reports. Spending time together

helps solidify team-work, helps clarify any issues and helps to make sure you and your people are being accountable to each other.

Communicate

Stop relying on email and memos; have personal conversations with the people in your group. Allow your people to be honest with you. Spend at least a little personal time with each person every month if you can. Learn to be a good listener. You will learn a lot about how to deal with your people if you hear what they say.

Leave Well Enough Alone

Sometimes managers feel that people can perform better and can produce more, but if employees have found a comfortable and satisfactory balance it is best not to disturb. Resist the temptation to over manage them.

There are times when your people just need to be left alone to do their jobs. Some days you will work hard to mold people's behavior and performance when what they really needed was to be left alone to do their jobs. Some days you will leave people alone when what they really needed was to be working with someone. Try to ask yourself each day, who needs time from me today? Ask yourself who needs to be left alone?

If you allow yourself to admit that there is no good way to manage people, you can do your company a lot of good by trying to be a better manager every day. Work on best practices, get to know your people, communicate personally, and above all leave well enough alone. If you try too hard to manage people or if you go too far in attempting to manage behavior, you'll end up throwing your hands up in the air and declaring *there is no good way to manage people!*

About the Author

Tron Jordheim is the CMO of StorageMart, one of the world's largest privately held self-storage companies with locations across the U.S. and Canada. He has helped lead the company to double-digit revenue growth for the last four years by embracing digital marketing and call center support. Jordheim has consulted for companies and spoken at trade events in the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Spain and Mexico. Prior to StorageMart, Jordheim managed one of Culligan Water's top U.S. bottled water franchises. With 40+ years of experience in sales, marketing and training, he continues to be sought after as a public speaker, sales trainer and consultant. For more information, please visit <http://www.storage-mart.com/blog/author/tron-jordheim>.