

Right way, wrong way leadership

As seen in BizTimes

Scenario one:

The story as shared by one of the human resource business partners of a large, multi-facility manufacturing company: “One of our sites brought in a new operations manager. This site happens to have a 50 percent seasoned workforce and another 50 percent younger workforce with a high degree of turnover (almost 100 percent churn). We were looking forward to having a leader in this site who could help us strengthen the operation and tackle the turnover challenge that we face, as well as attract much-needed workers. During the interview process, we felt confident that this particular person would be an asset to this facility.

“We’re about two months in, and it’s been very disappointing. He has recruited a number of his employees to come over from his previous employer. It would seem that this is a good thing. However, he has been hanging out with his ‘friends’ from his past job, providing them more leniency than others, chatting with them in his office, and not taking time to meet the employees of the organization that he has joined. He doesn’t know everyone by name yet.

“To further complicate the situation, the disappointed employees have gone to the leader of this new manager, the GM, to voice their concerns and disappointments. The GM has responded in

defense of the operations manager, sharing accolades about the employees he has brought in to the organization and the things they collectively are accomplishing.

“The seasoned employees of the organization are disappointed, feeling dismissed, disregarded, not valued and ignored. Within two months, a few key people have already left. Morale has plummeted.”

Scenario two:

Three months ago, a manufacturing facility (with 200 employees across three shifts) hired a new manufacturing manager. His predecessor was a leader who gave very little attention to the employees. I knew him, and I think it's fair to say that he primarily flitted about, hovered on the surface of everything and didn't ask for opinions, listen to opinions or address issues that were raised. He was a disappointment to the employees.

The new manufacturing manager, over the course of three months, elicited the following responses from a group of front line supervisors and leads that I met with:

- “Things have improved by leaps and bounds.”
- “Communication by shifts is now happening.”
- “Employee engagement has visibly improved.”
- “He has been communicating to the other side of the wall better than we can.”
- “Things are getting fixed.”
- “It's so nice to work with someone who likes people.”

I asked what he's been doing to achieve these results, and the leads and supervisors shared these things:

- “He is listening!”
- “His view is, ‘It's the guys out there who make this company.’”
- “He visited third shift for two days. He followed me (supervisor) around; I didn't follow him around. He talked to each one of my employees and asked them about themselves. Morale went from down in the dumps to above water.”
- “He has spent time with me. I got to know him as a person. The relationship makes a difference.”
- “He has welcomed our newcomers and assigned them to a mentor, one of our employees who helps to make sure they are meeting other employees, ensures they have someone to sit with at lunch, and is available to answer their questions.”

Leaders have the power to raise people up!

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