



PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

ABSTRACT

The key difference between traditional command and control and people centred management is the use of soft skills to engender enthusiasm in the employees for the organisation's goals.

Motivation Matters Limited



Introduction

Let me be bold. Management is the management of people. The management of objects is administration. Planning the functions and throughput of a machine is simple. The Set up time, the Run time to process each item and the Down time for maintenance can all be nicely managed through a spreadsheet. You can even estimate the “mean time between failure” and build in to your plan a contingency for unexpected breakdowns.

Is this the way you manage people? For some it is the only way to “manage”. They administer their people as if they are machines and call it hardnosed management.

But this management approach does not deliver the performance excellence that is needed. Sooner or later, after going through leadership and management training, engagement surveys, reward strategies and whatever else the management consulting profession can invent, the hardnosed management style leaves you with the feeling that things are just not clicking, things could be better, something just isn't right.

What is missing are the skills that link “administering functions” to arousing people's enthusiasm to carry out those functions.

Traditional management

Most of us have worked for these people! They have a command and control style. They have no wish to employ your creative mind. The closer you behave to a robot the better! Imagine - no rest breaks!

Your performance is reviewed, targets are used to drive you to work harder and you understand your value to the organisation is what you can produce.

You are rewarded and disciplined according to your output. You understand you should sell as little of your labour for as much money as possible in this commercial relationship.

Your employer gives you the statutory benefits associated with employment and your willingness to do anything unrewarded is negligible.

You keep an eye on the job vacancies, you don't advertise the fact you work for your organisation and you may even succumb to the joy of playing the game of doing as little as possible to see if they notice.

You can see the effects of this hardnosed management in the people and organisations you know.

But it isn't hardnosed, it is fossilised! It is management by spreadsheets and it doesn't produce anywhere near the best results!





People centred management

A people centred manager uses his or her soft skills to enthuse people to help the organisation achieve its goals.

The volunteer stewards at the London 2012 Olympics are a perfect example. They bought into the vision of a great global event and wanted to be part of it. They ensured the visitors were greeted and helped to the right venues without pay, without anything other than the feeling of being part of something worthwhile.

To create that willingness in people to work requires a number of soft skills.

Here is my list of the top ten soft skills:

1. Rapport - to be cognisant of the listener's life
2. Empathy - to genuinely care about the listener
3. Understanding – to see through the listener's eyes what their life is like
4. Persuasiveness – to use words and body language to convey their understanding of the world
5. Explanation - ability to communicate in the listener's terms
6. Trustworthiness – to have people believe they can trust you
7. Honesty – to be honest in all things
8. Respect – to both give and receive respect as humans containing the divine spark of life
9. Courage – to know when to ask for all-out effort and when to give a respite
10. Vision - to see the path to achieving the goals and have the people believe in your vision

These skills speak for themselves. The people centred manager explains, agrees objectives and supports the people who work with him to achieve them.

People feel valued, are proud of what they do and feel fairly rewarded. They would regard getting a new job with dismay!





Why do managers find soft skills so hard?

Traditional managers use their hierarchical authority to justify their decisions, actions and instructions.

The “I am in charge so I am right” methodology delivers instructions for people to follow. There is no need to discuss or explain, the watchword is “just do it!”

A busy manager faced with a full schedule of reviews, instructions and plans to work through has no time to explain, to discuss or to gain commitment from the employee.

The busy manager may even yearn to sit and chat over what needs doing but time does not allow it. The other work is slipping, it needs pulling back on track and the manager is just so frustrated that things could be better if only people did as they were told!

These symptoms of a busy manager are due to not taking the time to explain and gain commitment from the people in the first place.

The ultimate absurdity is when the busy manager finds it easier to do the task him or herself instead of instructing someone to do it. They feel the only way to get something done is to do it themselves and wonder why they employ all those lazy good for nothing idle shirkers.

As I said in the beginning, managing is managing people. It isn't doing the task yourself but getting the task done through people.

To get people to understand and be enthusiastic about their tasks requires soft skills and personal communication. You can't hide behind a desk or a spreadsheet. You have to be there in person, head to head, heart to heart. That doesn't necessarily imply a physical presence every time, but there has to be a personal presence – the way you keep in touch with your parents or children. They know you care even if hundreds or thousands of miles away.

The reason traditional managers find people centred management so difficult, is they have to expose their character which they have hidden behind the authority of their position up to now.

Do you think they have the personal qualities to get their message across and get their people to believe in them?

There is every reason to think they have those qualities albeit a little rusty and in need of a polish.

If they have risen to a position of authority they must have achieved results so they understand what is needed and probably worked hard too. All they have to do is communicate that understanding and passion to their people.





Why is it so important?

Successful people centred management is important for three reasons:

1. The performance of the individual
2. The performance of the organisation
3. The performance of the country

The only way we are going to keep our jobs, make our organisations effective and profitable and bring prosperity to our country is to boost our performance every day till we are the obvious choice, the best, the global leaders.

For the organisation the reduction of staff turnover, absenteeism, presenteeism and the commitment to achieve drives performance through the roof!

For the individuals, managers and staff, work becomes fulfilling, a measure of self-worth, less stressful, more secure and better paid.

Why wouldn't you work harder?

Conclusion

Soft skills are the key to survival in the 21st century. Is there something in the British psyche that hinders us from showing people who we are, saying what we want and expressing an opinion on their behaviour?

I believe there is a hindrance and it blunts the innate ingenuity of people that flourished in the Victorian era when great individuals did great things. We still have great individuals, we just have trouble forming them into great effective organisations.

Of course we will find this uncomfortable at first. The similarity to giving up smoking, dieting or alcohol is noticeable. The long term benefits are difficult to imagine and internalise so you keep doing the bad things. But the success this management method brings makes you forget the discomfort very quickly once the success is visible!

This is the answer to poor performance and productivity.





MOTIVATION MATTERS LIMITED

VISION

Inspiring good management, and thus achievement, within organizations will improve employee attitudes, engagement and job satisfaction to create stronger companies with more productive people.

More productive companies build competitive advantage creating a sustainable business with safe growth, healthy profits, secure well paid jobs and contribute to the well-being of the UK.

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