SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT ALWAYS PEGGED TO PEOPLE

People are still any company’s most valuable asset and the keystone to good management is hinged to how well the contractor handles people

By Clarence G. Scholtz

The keystone of successful management for any contractor is the ability to handle people. How you manage people is a most important responsibility because a company’s personnel is its most valuable asset.

It must be appreciated that each individual employee is a problem who must be handled individually. As you know, everyone in this country has a right to his own opinion. If a person is to use his brains, he is bound to think differently than other individuals. Each employee must be studied to note his reaction to any given situation which arises. Some, you will find, are born leaders; others have mechanical minds; some are theorists; others are more practical in their approach to problems.

It is folly to expect a born leader to spend his time doing menial work, just as equally foolish is it to expect a person with a mechanical mind to be expert in managing. It is management’s duty to assign each employee to that position in the company where individual capability will give the greatest management benefit.

Each company employee represents an investment and it is up to management to recoup that investment by managing correctly. There should be no room in any organization for a “Simon Legree,” a sadist, or a Broadway playwright. To be blunt, it is necessary for those who occupy important managerial positions to be business-like and moderate.

Today, employees will resent—in fact, they will rebel against — unfair or unreasonable demands of supervisors, office managers, unit chiefs, and others who are their superiors.

If orders are not clearly given, reasonable, business-like and necessary, there is trouble ahead. On the other hand, you will find that practically all employees have a distinct desire to be of assistance if given a chance. Every person has an ego and wants a chance to feel important and to be part of the team. This latent ambition can be aroused by an understanding attitude on the part of those in a supervisory position.

Most individuals like to work for a company where there is a mood of harmony. If they constantly have to be fighting with some fellow employee or have to listen to others bickering, or work where there is a distinct tension between those in charge and the rank and file, you will find that employees with intestinal fortitude will get out and go elsewhere. A careful review of the reasons why employees leave an organization will disclose that it is not entirely due to salary considerations. Quite the reverse is true. Most individuals leave for some other reason than dissatisfaction with their pay and it is up to you to see that good employees do not leave. It is likewise
It is folly to expect a born leader to spend his time doing menial work, just as equally foolish is it to expect a person with a mechanical mind to be expert in managing important for management to see that incompetent employees are not hired, but where they do slip through, to see that they are released at an early date.

It should not be overlooked that a successful superintendent or foreman is only successful because he can produce a maximum of work with a minimum of mechanics. It is in his work crews where we find hard-working, contented, loyal and efficient workers. Yet we have construction leaders who believe that their prestige is based on the number of employees they have in their crews. This is utter nonsense. The inability to get work done without adding superfluous help adds to operating costs—and in this day of high labor costs can ruin an organization.

Watch for the foreman who having secured an above-average employee will do everything to prevent that individual’s being promoted or transferred from his control. This you must prevent. You must make it clear to all who are in your employ that what is best for the company is the decision to be made. Then too, watch out for favoritism, the situation where one of your supervisory employees will cover up the mistakes, or otherwise favor one employee at the expense of others. While you may hesitate to countermand the order of one of your superintendents, it should be done because in the long run top management authority must prevail to correct abuses, mistakes, “politics”, and egotism.

Being a good contractor isn’t easy. Here are just eight guidelines to help those in your company at the managerial level to do a better job:

1. Get to know the people working for you. A knack for making people feel important is vital to the development of your managerial ability. One of the best ways to do this is to get to know them—and then treat them—as individuals. Get acquainted, talk with
them and be observant.

2. **Show them how to get ahead.** A contractor’s job is to secure the best possible performance from his people. By building up a man’s confidence in you, then finding out what he wants, you may be able to show him how he can reach his goals by doing something you would like him to do.

3. **Criticize constructively.** Remember that there are three basic reasons for criticizing on the job: to prevent a recurrence of some pattern of behavior; to teach “better ways”; and to increase efficiency. A good five-step plan for criticism that achieves these objectives is to get all the facts, stay calm, criticize in private, commend before you find fault, keep your criticism constructive by emphasizing how to do the job better.

4. **Be generous with compliments.** The man who is immune to the power of a sincere compliment has yet to be born. But sincerity is the key to successful praise. When a man deserves to be commended, let him know about it — and whenever possible, bestow your bouquets in public. But make sure you mean it. If you don’t, the compliment will fall embarrassingly flat.

5. **Listen to their problems.** Your workers may tell you that they are wasting precious time because you haven’t the latest in shop or site machines. Investigate. Ask a salesman to demonstrate new machinery to you, even ask for a trial use of a demonstrator model. Solving one problem isn’t enough. Encourage your employees to be “discontented” with bottle-necks, to be constantly on the lookout for better ways to do things. It is then that your competitors will be envious of your efficient, happy staff.

One final suggestion. Communication or the lack of it is bandied about when dealing with the problems of management. If you’ve gotten anything at all out of this article, make sure that others in your company who must handle people get a chance to read it. Circulate the magazine or have an office aide run off copies on a photo-copy machine.