Putting these leadership skills to work

A great leader is a manager who supports his or her employees and is willing to give up some control by letting employees make their own decisions. You hire these employees in the first place because of their skills and ability to do their jobs, right? Focus on cultivating these traits in your own performance to become an effective leader:

- **Strong communication.** Express your priorities clearly so employees can make good decisions about how to do their jobs. Let them know right away when you spot performance problems, and when they do good work. Don’t hide bad news, and be ready to listen to their questions, ideas, and concerns.
- **Goal setting.** Goals can motivate performance and results. Work with employees to develop goals for team performance and personal development. Describe objectives and metrics clearly so employees know what to work toward, and provide lots of encouragement and feedback along the way.
- **Feedback.** Employees should know how they’re doing on the job, whether they need to improve or they’re exceeding expectations. Make feedback an everyday activity, not a formal event once a year. Remind employees that you value their work, and coach them toward a higher level of performance no matter where they are in their career.
- **Transparency.** Share as much information with employees as you can. The more they know, the better decisions they’ll make. Don’t worry about scaring them with bad news. Most employees would rather learn what’s going on from you than find out through rumors or other sources.
- **Input.** Feedback doesn’t have to go in one direction. Ask employees how you’re doing and what you can do better. Solicit ideas for improving your organization, and implement as many as possible. They’ll feel more like full partners if you listen to them and respect their viewpoints.

http://www.managethebetter.biz/

Setting an example to be a good leader

When you are asking others in your business to step up as trustworthy, charismatic and effective leaders, one of the best ways to train them is to model the characteristics of a good leader. As they watch you lead them, they will learn from your example how to be good leaders themselves.

- **Establish a clear vision.** A good leader must know where he is leading his employees. Therefore, you need to establish a clear vision for the direction of the company and for individual projects. Share the vision with others to give them examples of what vision casting looks like. As the company or market changes, adjust your vision as needed and share the new vision to model flexibility.
- **Communicate.** Maintain clear lines of communication among yourself and the people who work under you. Leaders need to be able to effectively point others in the right direction and the only way you can do that is if you talk with people, share ideas and respond with concrete communication when changes are occurring.
- **Command attention.** If your team respects you, you will have their attention whenever you need to say something and they will respond appropriately. One way to command attention is to refrain from unimportant interactions. For example, consider Michael Scott, a character in the television show "The Office." His employees do not pay attention to him because he rarely has something worth saying.
- **Listen.** Nobody likes a leader who refuses to listen to the ideas, suggestions and concerns of those he is leading. Set an example in this area by making yourself accessible to people who have things to share with you. Give eye contact to show that you are listening, repeat back or ask clarifying questions to make sure you understand and implement some of the ideas.
- **Provide direction.** As the leader, it is often your fault if an endeavor does not succeed. Demonstrate your proficiency and expertise in the area by offering suggestions and direction for people who are having trouble completing their tasks. Give clear and concrete steps and check back periodically to see how things are going and provide more direction if needed.
- **Chip in.** Just because you’re a leader, that doesn’t mean you are exempt from chipping in to help when the people who work under you are bogged down. If a competent employee has too much on his plate, help him with it. People will take notice of your servant leadership and be inspired to help each other as well.
- **Be visible.** Let others see what you are doing and how hard you are working by maintaining a steady presence. Your example of strong leadership will not be of much use if nobody notices what you do.

Source: Kristen May, Demand Media, http://smallbusiness.chron.com/
Keeping your employees engaged with one simple question

“What tools do you need to get your work done or to do your job more effectively?” It’s this open-ended question that allows employees to express their wants and needs, but the key to keeping employees engaged is not dependent upon catering to their every whim, says J.W. “Bill” Marriott of Marriott Hotels. “A manager doesn’t have to give their employees everything they ask for. But they do have to listen to them and respond. If housekeepers ask their supervisors for more linens on the third floor, a supervisor must try very hard to accommodate that request immediately. But if they ask for something that management cannot deliver for them, the supervisor should at least tell the employees why their request can’t be met or a timeframe for when that request will be handled,” he adds. Marriott punctuated the significance of this principle when he concluded: “Employees tend to stay in a job when they feel as if they are being listened to and their requests and opinions are valued.” When was the last time you asked your people what they needed to perform better in their jobs? Source: http://www.ragan.com/

Building respect with one small gesture

One quick way to alienate your employees is to violate their sense of space. This is especially important to remember when people have little space to control—small cubicles or shared workstations, for instance. Always ask permission before you set something down—a folder, a coffee cup, or whatever—on another person’s desk or work surface. Showing this respect for their space will build their trust and comfort level in dealing with you. Source: www.managebetter.biz

Managing yourself

Whilst good exercise, sleep and diet are essential requirements for peak performance, take time out to reflect on the big picture of what you are trying to achieve at work and in life. Remember what you have achieved to date in your role, your successes, and what your priorities are moving forward. This pro-

Planning time for good news

Making time to communicate with employees can be hard. One solution: Try putting it on a schedule. Plan to share information, recognize effort, or offer some motivation in small bites early in the morning and just before workers leave at night. Most people take a little time to rev up for work and decompess before they leave, making these good opportunities for a chat or pat on the back. A morale boost before starting work or to take home can give some extra motivation to do great work.

Avoiding risks

The employee who never makes a mistake may seem like a great worker. In reality, he or she may not be trying anything new. Recognize employees who are willing to stick their necks out and take chances—even if they make an occasional mistake. Source: http://www.managebetter.biz/

Leaders become great, not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others.

--John Maxwell

Learning “soft” skills is worth the time and effort

Companies can benefit from improving the self-awareness, social awareness and communication skills of their employees, writes Shelley Row. But they too often don’t because such abilities are considered “soft” and aren’t acquired without effort. “‘Soft’ skills can’t be learned in a once-a-year breakout session. They deserve attention, investment, energy, and focus repeatedly and over time,” Row writes.

The role of a manager during organizational change

Leader. To effectively implement change, a manager needs to be a good leader. The manager must orga-
ize and plan the change and use lead-
ership skills to inspire employees to embrace it. Leadership is a broad term that incorpo-
rating and inspiring those around you to embrace a perspective.

Negotiator. A negotiator is similar to a leader. When organizations are developing or under-
going change, the manager is often required to negotiate clearly and steadfastly with com-
petitors, contractors, suppliers, and employ-
ees. A manager needs to be able to negotiate with all of these parties in a way that effecti-
vely serves the best interests of the organi-
zation.

Figurehead. A manager also needs to act as a figurehead of the organization. Upper man-
agement in particular is responsible for creat-

ing and reinforcing delivery of the mission and vision of an organization to employees, cus-
tomers, and other stakeholders. Employees in particular must understand where the orga-
nization is headed and what its ultimate goals are. A manager-figurehead can come to sym-
bolize the organization as a whole for custom-

ers. The manager who builds a positive rap-
port with both customers and employees cre-
ates a positive association of her/himself with the organization at large.

Liaison and communicator. When manag-
ers effectively communicate their vision for the organization, employees are more likely to engage with their work and exert themselves to further the organizational mission. Commu-
nication is at the core of managing change effectively. Transparency and empathy are in-
tegral to making employees aware of and com-
fortable with the changes taking place. Man-
agers in an evolving organization must stay in constant contact with their direct reports to ensure that everything is running smoothly and that all stakeholders are educated and on board.

Source: https://www.boundless.com

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