

How to Overcome the Five Fatal Flaws of Management

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Feel like your organization isn't going where you want it to? First, make sure you're not being snared by the five fatal flaws of management. Take a look.

Flaw No. 1: Unclear, inconsistent communication

Our research shows that 90 percent of management problems are people problems and percent of people problems stem from poor communication. With that in mind, it's worth looking at the way the message is being delivered.

A book entitled "The Psychology of Memory" states that you retain only 10 percent of what you hear 72 hours after hearing it. We have found that the biggest stumbling block to good communication is poor listening skills. What can be done to improve your listening skills? How can you deliver a better message?

Here are five ways to be a better listener.

- Eliminate distractions.
- Get rid of excess paper to reduce distractions at your desk.
- Know your blind spots – assumptions and prejudices.
- Be an active listener. Paraphrase and ask questions.
- Be an empathic listener. Listen for context clues within the message.

And here are five ways to deliver a better message.

- Know your objective.
- Be clear, specific and concise.
- State your point in 25 words or less.
- Check for understanding.
- Watch your body language.

Flaw No. 2: Failure to acknowledge change

In management, the belief of status quo is a serious and dangerous delusion. You're either moving forward or falling behind. Even if you don't actually see the changes on a daily basis, it doesn't mean that they are not happening.

So why do some managers try to ignore change? Our research shows that there are four reasons:

- Emotion – fear of the unknown, anger, uncertainty, mistrust
- Perception – they don't see the need for the change
- Attitude – they believe that most changes are not for the better
- Reluctance – they adopt a wait and see attitude

Remember, your team will sense and react to change whether the manager chooses to accept it or ignore it. One way to successfully communicate a change that is about to occur is by using our change message model:

- State the change and be clear, concise and truthful.

- Payoffs – Explain why the change is occurring and what the benefits will be.
- Support – How are we going to get there?
- Optimism – Be positive about the future.

Flaw No. 3: Managing everyone alike

Members of your staff each require a different level of care and attention so it's imperative that you adjust your management, coaching and mentoring skills to each of them. One handy way to begin the development coaching process with your new team members – and all existing members, for that matter – is to take a snap shot. SNAP is an acronym for:

- **S**trengths: What does your team member do well? What do they most enjoy?
- **N**ext goals: What are their short and long-term goals? What do they want to accomplish this year?
- **A**ssistance: How can you help them get there? What resources are required?
- **P**rofessional Development: What skills would they like to improve or learn this year? What are the best ways for them to learn?

Flaw No. 4: Failure to establish clear expectations

- Make sure all tasks are clear and understood.
- At the beginning of each year, establish each individual's performance appraisal criteria. Create individual development plans.
- Establish a contract with difficult employees to ensure success.
- Create smaller, incremental goals that are measured on a monthly and quarterly basis. Establish a quarterly review process for your team.
- Provide a variety of work.
- Form a sponsor/mentor program.

Flaw No. 5: Poor time management

- Know what you want from your time.
- The proven way to do it is to set goals and to set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, rewarding and timely) goals.
- Learn the difference between urgent and important.
- Know and respect your priorities.
- Plan your actions for achieving your goals.
- Schedule time for your tasks.
- Know how you spend your time.
- Analyze time wasters.

If you take the time to integrate some of the tips from this article into the day-to-day management of your team, I am positive that your team will deliver the desired results.