

## Leading Others

To begin, it is important to recognise the difference between being a manager and a leader:

- **Managers** achieve results by directing the activities of others. They plan activities, organise structures and control resources.
- **Leaders** achieve results by creating a shared goal and inspiring others to want to achieve it.

Business owners need to cultivate leadership skills if they are to effectively play the formal managerial roles they occupy. Here are some key ways to lead through others:

### Create a culture

Over time, your company will develop a unique identity of its own which is communicated in the typical attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of the people who work there. Left to itself, this culture will grow like a weed, anywhere it finds nourishment. The results may be at odds with the image you want to convey to customers and may work against your competitive advantage. Instead, you should deliberately create the culture you want.

As a leader, you play a key role in setting an example that others can follow. If you want people to provide high-quality service to customers, then you need to model that behaviour. The same goes for your treatment of employees – if you are seen to value loyalty and honesty, then your employees will value those too. Don't ask your staff to do anything which you are not prepared to do yourself.

### Connect to motivation

Owners sometimes complain that their employees lack motivation or don't seem motivated to succeed. This is a mistaken view. Every employee is motivated to behave in the way they currently do. If they appear lazy, the reason may lie in how they perceive their efforts were treated. If they appear bored, the reason may lie in them not having variety in their work. If they treat customers badly, the reason may lie in them having no investment in customers being satisfied. Examine what systems of rewards are really operating and change them to reward the behaviour you want instead.

Empower your employees by giving them more control over how their work is done, more say in what work they do and more responsibility for suggesting what work needs to be done and how improvements can be made. The more pride of ownership you can cultivate in your employees for the work that they personally do, the higher the quality of their output will be. Any employee would prefer to be enthusiastic rather than bored – the key is finding how each employee's motivation can be aligned with the company's success. Decide what your team members are good at and give them the freedom and resources to get the job done without needing you around.

### Communicate goals

Nothing is more frustrating than not knowing what is going on. Employees who come to work each day and feel ignored – or uninformed about where the company is going and what it is trying to achieve – are like ships without rudders adrift on the ocean. You cannot lead through others if they don't know where you want to go.

Instead, ensure you have regular ways of communicating with all employees. This involves holding regular group meetings to involve employees in establishing objectives for the company and its various departments. It includes posting these objectives in public places so all can be reminded of them. And it extends to your reinforcing informally through any daily contact with employees the importance of the jobs that they are doing and how they are linked to achieving the company's goals. In-house newsletters can be an effective communication tool.

## **Celebrate successes**

At the same time you begin to communicate goals more clearly to everyone, you also need to start tracking your progress towards achieving those goals. Otherwise your efforts will be wasted and the energies you have started into motion will wither because staff will not receive feedback on how well they are doing.

Solicit feedback from customers and publicize any praise the company receives. Set profit targets for each area and hand out rewards when they are achieved. Those rewards don't need to be money – try giving extra days off, promotion and more responsibility or special awards of excellence. Hold celebrations in honour of winning large orders or important contracts or bring in food and refreshments to reward people who have to stay late to meet the deadline. Remember that regular small things you do to encourage people are more important than infrequent large ones.

## **Learn to delegate**

Perhaps the single most important aspect of taking your company to the next level is learning to delegate more of your work to other staff as you hire them. Entrepreneurs are notorious for being self-starters and action-oriented. As their companies grow, they need to become more comfortable doing less of the actual work themselves and directing others instead. The larger their companies grow, the further they become removed from the daily tasks of production, marketing and selling – and the closer they move to organising, coordinating and leading others.

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