INTEGRITY
MANAGEMENT CONSULTING GROUP*

Keeping It Simple – A Consistent Approach to Management

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"Keep it simple! Move with predetermined intent and above all, be consistent!" These words ran through my mind over and over again as I pondered the secret to successful effective management. These are the words of my old basketball coach who preached this principle of simplicity and consistency day in and day out over the course of many seasons. The fact is that there are a multitude of different management practices, attitudes, theories, applications, etc. I am not going to argue that one is more effective or relevant than another. My purpose is to simply provide a foundation for implementing your employee management skills successfully.

The key to this can be narrowed down to one word, consistency. Be consistent. Generally speaking, a consistent manager is an effective manager. The first step to becoming a consistent manager is consciously choosing to regard events that occur at work as professional circumstances and not attaching a personal element to them. The consistent manager will make decisions based on circumstances, facts and protocols. They will not give differential or special treatment to certain employees. If an employee attempts to make a situation personal, steer the conversation back to the issue at hand. It is vital to distinguish between personal friendships and working relationships. If you are consistent there will be no surprises.

The benefits associated with a consistent management approach are great. Employees learn what is expected of them and they can correctly anticipate the consequences, good or bad, of every action they take. In other words, consistent management breeds improved employee productivity because they are more aware of what is expected of them. It also develops a mutual understanding of fairness between the manager and the employees. This understanding will lead to respect. Not all of your employees will necessarily like you but they will respect you as a fair manager. This fostering of fairness and respect among your team may aid in singling out problematic employees who for whatever reason (groundless feelings of entitlement, uncomfortable accepting change, personal problems, etc.) are unwilling to share in this culture of fairness and consistency. The refusal of acceptance will leave these employees feeling backed into a corner and they will not last long as they have made themselves outcasts.

With all these positives resulting from the simple practice of consistency, the working atmosphere begins to resemble a well oiled machine allowing the manager to spend more time working hands off because the employees know how to behave, they know what to do, and they are fully aware of the repercussions if they drift.

Think of consistency as a bridge that has its many supports. This bridge holds up and carries on it all the aforementioned benefits. Every time you stray from consistency, you take away one of the bridges support beams. When this happens the bridge will collapse and all the benefits are washed away with it leaving you with a mess that is not so easy to clean up and will take a lot of time and effort to rebuild.

Confucious, a Chinese philosopher once said, “Rain puts a hole in stone due to its consistency, not its force.” This idea metaphorically demonstrates what a person can accomplish by applying a consistent approach to the way they manage.