

Globe Careers

MENTOR MINUTE » BY EILEEN CHADNICK

Ramp up the 'people' part of your leadership

THE SCENARIO

I've just completed my first year in a leadership role and had a disappointing performance review. My boss acknowledged that I have good skills in advancing projects but he said he wasn't seeing enough effective leadership. He wants to see me ramp up the "people" side of the job. I'm at a loss. What is he looking for?

THE ADVICE

Leaders these days need to do more than advance projects. They must also inspire employees and help them grow. Many new leaders make the mistake of trying to prove their worth by focusing exclusively on managing projects, tactics and output, and are misguided in thinking more is always better.

Instead, leadership is about bringing the best out in staff and building individual and team abilities to perform. It is also about infusing a sense of engagement and enthusiasm for doing great work. The best leaders learn how to tap those discretionary reserves in their people, and draw out the best from each one.

SEE EMPLOYEES AS PEOPLE, NOT JUST RESOURCES

Your employees have unique talents, aspirations, strengths and career goals. Get to know who each of them are and what inspires them to do their best work. Help them develop. Watch for where they naturally excel and what projects and tasks give them energy, and look for common themes.

Your employees have unique talents, aspirations, strengths and career goals.

Get to know who each of them are and what inspires them to do their best work.

Help them develop.

Have conversations about their strengths and career goals and help them develop further with career opportunities that match.

INSTILL A SENSE OF PURPOSE

If your meetings and communications are only about assigning tasks, time lines and what is to be delivered, it's time to change. You must also infuse a sense of purpose in the work you all do. Involve staff in developing goals, work plans and solutions. Talk about how their work contributes to the greater goals of the team and the organization. Share stories about how each person's efforts makes a difference; Answer the 'why' they are doing their work and what's in it for them.

ACKNOWLEDGE AND REWARD

People who work hard without being acknowledged either burn out or leave. Make sure your staff know their

hard work is both noticed and appreciated. A simple "thank you, great job" can often do the trick. Even better, recognize the effort they put in, not just the outcome. Acknowledge team efforts at meetings or in group e-mails. You will be surprised how a strong performer can squeeze out even more resourcefulness, creativity and extra effort when he or she feels acknowledged, appreciated and supported with a path to grow.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

High-achieving leaders often forget to pause and reflect on their and their employees' accomplishments and milestones. Take the time with staff to reflect on them and share lessons learned from reaching each milestone. Make them mean something. Celebrate. And use each success to build energy and enthusiasm for the next one.

WORK TOGETHER, NOT JUST FOR

Build more team into the team. Engage in team-building activities and encourage a supportive culture. If you travel together, step by step, you can climb mountains. Just make sure everyone's sights are on the same peak. Otherwise, you may find yourself a lonely mountaineer and no better a leader than when you started on your journey.

» Eileen Chadnick is a certified coach and principal of Big Cheese Coaching in Toronto.

» Send your career questions to: globecareers@globeandmail.com