

Invite Self-Managed Staff

By Linda LaPointe

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"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being."
Goethe

Two hundred years ago, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, German poet and philosopher, knew how to inspire and interact with others: recognize the best in them and act upon those positive expectations. This takes conscious effort and constant vigilance to be self-aware of our actions. And we owe our fellow human beings nothing less. Successful supervisors live this sentiment daily in their connections with their fellow human beings. They believe in the basic goodness of people and consciously act upon their beliefs in every contact, every day. These staffers guide the people with whom they work toward self-esteem, self-confidence and self-determination.

Effective supervisors, those

who develop staff who are trusted, productive and stable, assist them to become what they are capable of: self-managed, productive and trusted. This requires a combination of the best of 'soft' skills, or how we treat people, and 'hard' skills, or how we engage and support their capabilities.

Supervisors are stronger in one of these skills than in another, but the best supervisors become good at both and make a conscious effort toward a balance. The following ABC's make an immediate and measurable change in the workplace. The A's and B's, or act and believe, are the soft skills in practice, and the C, or coaching, employs the hard skills.

A's & B's: Actions and Beliefs

The seven back to basics beliefs which help us treat people the way Goethe intended:

1. People are important and deserve respect.
2. Ordinary people can perform extraordinarily.
3. People deserve to be trusted.
4. People are good and want to do a good job.
5. People are self-motivated.
6. It is our job to assist others to grow and become "stars".
7. Supervising is a humbling experience.

Wasn't it your mother who said, actions speak louder than words? Our beliefs dictate our actions, but most of us are too busy to really take each of these and hold them up to the light, inspecting their every attribute and power. We do business as usual without reconsidering our commonly accepted behaviors toward employees. Do our actions unequivocally manifest positive beliefs? Do our actions demonstrate that we believe that staff are trustworthy, or do we lock up our supplies? Do we act as if frontline staff are the most important worker in our organization because they do the work for which the company is paid, or do we interrupt a meeting with them to take a call or make them wait for us to arrive for an appointment? Do we hover over their work or insult them with insignificant gifts or raises? Do we recognize them for their daily efforts or thank them for being at their work station so we don't have to do their job on any given day? Do we educate them in the business side of the company and ask them for their opinion in big decisions? These soft skills and actions make the difference between humane or harsh workplaces, between bosses to whom staff will be loyal or bosses who staff plan to leave. All actions articulate our beliefs.

C: Coach as Leader, Manager and Supervisor

The workplace coach functions as leader, manager, and supervisor to support and elicit exceptional performance. Each of these three roles has distinct behaviors, intent, and purpose. The coach as leader: The leader imparts philosophy to create and support care-full staff. Philosophy is the only signpost to give guidance in unanticipated situations. Every coach must lead by imparting philosophy. Vigorously ask & answer “why” questions such as, Why does the company exist? Why does the world and our community need us? Why do we choose to join this endeavor? Why do we do something this way instead of that way? Every one of us wants to aspire to a higher purpose. To be part of something greater than ourselves fulfills our desire to belong and provides us with an important place where we can make a difference in this world.

The coach as manager: The manager conveys knowledge to create and support staff who are mind-full and power-full. The coach in the role of manager answers “what” questions. What business are we in? What do we do to fulfill our purpose? What difference do we make to our customers? What are our goals? What are our expected customer outcomes and business objectives?

The coach as supervisor: The supervisor establishes structure to support staff who are success-full. The coach as supervisor answers “how” questions: How do we do our business? How do we meet our goals? How is this task or activity performed and how do I prove it? How will we know when we get it right?

A good coach supports direct-care staff who are care-full, mind-full, power-full and success-full through imparting knowledge, philosophy, and structure. Goethe gave us the answer to creating humane human service workplaces 200 years ago.

Act, believe and coach your way to being a supervisor who staff will admire and want to work with. Focus on these basic ABC's, to develop a solid team of skilled, self-managed and stable employees.

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Linda LaPointe, MRA, has trained thousands in these simple but powerful practices. More free articles and pages from her book can be seen at <http://www.thenewsupervisor.com> She can be contacted at [lapointell@yahoo.com](mailto:lapointell@yahoo.com)

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