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# Managers:

## Don't Treat All Employees the Same Way

By Michel Theriault

We are all familiar with the golden rule that says to treat others as you yourself would like to be treated. However, don't take this maxim too literally in your role as a manager.

After all, everyone is different. How your employees respond and react to different situations will vary. In many cases, you do have to be fair in the way you treat your employees, but the reality is that each member of your staff is unique and you need to take that into account.

Treating everyone who works for you the same is "off the rack" management. You need to customize your management approach.

A more effective way of managing your staff is to understand each of your employees' personalities, capabilities, sensitivities, and other factors that might impact how they respond to any given situation and, in particular, how they differ from you.

Here are a few examples of common management activities where you should reconsider treating everyone the same:

## **GIVING FEEDBACK OR PRAISE**

Some your staff will perform at a top level regardless of whether you praise them or not. Others require constant pats on the back to keep them motivated.

Similarly, one person may enjoy being invited up to the front of the room and praised in front of their colleagues and peers, while somebody else may be very shy, have no interest in the attention, and in fact will be quite uncomfortable with it.

## **PROVIDING GUIDANCE OR DIRECTION**

Some employees need detailed instructions and direction, but others can simply be pointed in a direction and told the desired objective.

For those who need detailed instructions, it might not be because they have little motivation or don't know what to do. It may simply be a matter of personality, or perhaps they've gotten grief from a previous manager for doing things not exactly like he or she wanted. Find out what works for each of your staff members, and use it to get the best results from that individual.

## **SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Like the previous item, some employees are very happy having their goals and objectives handed down to them, while others have a need to contribute and help build those goals and objectives directly.

While in some cases your organization's requirements dictate those goals or objectives, with most employees there are numerous additional requirements that could be set collaboratively.

You can't always tell why which approach is the right one, since those who want to do it collaboratively may be trying to moderate expectations and those who want goals dictated may want an excuse when they can't deliver. Whether dictating goals and objectives or working collaboratively, be careful to keep in mind the potential motivation behind your employees' preferred approach.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Some employees take discipline and criticism very well, likely the more confident ones.

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Others, however, may be more sensitive to being told they did something wrong and be driven by fear of losing their job. They may stop taking risks or making their own decisions because of that fear.

Traditional management techniques usually wrap correction or discipline into a softer approach, telling employees to try to do things differently next time. That will work for many employees, but sometimes the more direct, harsher approach is the only way you will get change from that employee. Again, this is why it's important to understand your individual

employees — so you can apply the right approach.

## DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Some employees are driven to learn and take every opportunity they can for development and training, while others are less enthusiastic. Understanding the reasons for that lack of enthusiasm will go a long way to developing training that works for them.

For instance, off-site training may present logistical or family problems for some employees, so they resist it, or they know a day off from the job means they will work harder or even longer hours to recover from the office day they missed.

Even more important is that different people learn better with different techniques. Some employees may need the hands-on, workshop-type approach while others may prefer attending a lecture or even reading a book on the topic to get the knowledge they need.

While there are certainly benefits and drawbacks to the various techniques for learning and you need to make it work for your requirements, taking into account how each employee learns and trying to adapt the development and training program to those needs will go a long way.

### About Michel Theriault

Michel Theriault is an author, speaker, and consultant focusing on topics relevant to Managers and aspiring Managers in businesses of all sizes who want to get results, get attention, and get ahead. He is the author of *Write To Influence* (from the Quick Guides for Managers series), *Win More Business – Write Better Proposals* and *Managing Facilities & Real Estate*. *Write To Influence* is currently available as a free download in ebook and audiobook format. As the founder of Success Fuel for Managers, Michel's work includes training, consulting, seminars, and business-oriented books. Connect with Michel or read his blogs about management and leadership on his site at [www.successfuelformanagers.com](http://www.successfuelformanagers.com).