

Leadership in the Workplace

This month's article might not be so focussed on the law, but deals with management, leadership and at the end of the day, good industrial relations.

While ago, one of our radio stations hosted a guest who is one of the most successful business people in South Africa. The issue of leadership was raised with him which made me think of some issues that could be used by managers to have a good relationship with their staff.



Nico Pienaar

It is accepted that business is all about people. If people are happy, the business does well. If the managers are not good, generally the business does badly. Let's look at some issues:

Thankless jobs

Many companies have these types of jobs, packing groceries, filling up cars with petrol, drill operators in a mine and many more. How do you show appreciation to these people? Well, the easy one is to be friendly, thank the person, smile and exchange a few words. Recognition allows for respect.

Let people help decide

You might be the one who thinks you know everything, you tell everybody what to do, but have you ever asked others what they think?

Many years ago there was a factory with a production line which was not performing. This part of the factory held everybody's progress up. Engineers, production and planning people all sat around a table and spent hours trying to solve the problem.

One HR person walked past this section, saw a labourer sweeping, looking very unmotivated. The labourer was

stopped and asked how he was doing? He was surprised that somebody wearing a suit wanted to talk to him. He was then asked what he thought the problem was, why the section was holding up the production line?

His answer was that all that was needed was to break a hole through the wall, which would allow for a short-cut for those who had to bring and move boxes around the production area. This was done, problem solved: Now there was also attention given to this worker who was promoted.

The inquisitive employee

Yes, there are those who ask and those who don't. Employees always want to know where they stand in a business and what their future is?

They might ask about going on a course but actually they want to know their future in the company. A good leader needs to see these questions and try and answer them. Talk to the people.

The employee who makes you cross

There are always these in a workplace. The reaction from most managers is that this person does not listen and does not care. The reason why they act like this is because they want to make a point, etc. As the senior person, you need to deal with this employee. They need attention, speak to them, ask them how they see things, what their views are etc? Often these employees change and become your friend, trust you and share problems. Suddenly the problem employee is not there anymore.

Ask yourself

What do you think about me? Yes most managers ask themselves these questions. The problem in life is that you can't be all things to all people, but don't be rude and mean. Be polite and deal with issues, people may not like you, but they must have respect for you.

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