

GROWERTALKS

Paul's Pointers

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Improving Morale & Productivity

Paul Pilon



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It's hard to explain how excited I became when I learned that the October *GrowerTalks* was dedicated to greenhouse efficiency. It didn't take me but a few moments to determine how I was going to contribute to this subject. Naturally, my first thoughts were about covering the obvious: how to conserve energy, using automation to improve productivity or how to grow plants faster.

These topics would definitely be appropriate, and knowing my Ball Publishing colleagues, I'm sure they've definitely not let you down and have covered these topics in great detail in this issue. However, I'm taking a different approach with this one. I wanted to share an efficiency topic that affects all of us, perhaps opens my own vulnerabilities and is essential to any business. I've decided to cover how being

an effective manager and leader increases the trust and respect from your teams, which leads to increased happiness and productivity.

I'm far from being the leader or manager I'm capable of, but I'm well aware of the importance of being a good manager or leader (I'll be using these terms interchangeably throughout the article) and recognize the need to constantly remind myself of how others are counting on my leadership abilities.

As I write this, I'm coming to the realization that this is a huge topic and could easily fill an entire issue. That being said, I'll attempt to share with you the attributes I've found good managers possess.

What makes a good manager

Good managers are responsible for getting things done. They understand individual and team strengths and weaknesses, what drives and motivates them and how to encourage the best possible performance from their staff. If poor management is in place, it's easy for people to lose their motivation, enthusiasm, productivity and may even cause good employees to look for opportunities outside of the company.

Being adaptable. A good manager must recognize that everybody is different and adapt their management style to improve these working relationships and methods of how to communicate and motivate the different personalities.

Good communicator. This is a big one. Good leaders are good communicators. They easily navigate through the day-to-day conversations, use these skills to build strong working relationships, delegate tasks and motivate people, as well as navigate through any conflicts that arise. Additionally, being a good communicator also entails empowering others to speak as well.

Good listener. In conjunction with communication, listening is a very important management skill. These two skills go together; you can't have one without the other. Good managers are there to provide support to their employees. All team members should feel that they have a voice and their opinions will be heard. Managers must be good listeners and not be distracted or seem uninterested when being spoken to. They must be able to listen to and understand what is being said, whether it's a good conversation or a potential concern.

Decisiveness. Good leaders make decisive decisions. Managers who have trouble making quick decisions often find their teams lose confidence in them over time. Decisions need to be made constantly, quickly and with confidence. Making decisive decisions and communicating them clearly sets a good leader apart from a mediocre one.

Trust. Need I say that trust is critical? Building mutual trust between managers and team members is essential. Employees who feel trusted are better poised to achieve their potential. Trust allows tasks to be delegated more effectively. Trust allows leaders the ability to distribute the workload to their team, as well as allows them to use their time for management issues and other important tasks.

Lead by example. Perhaps this seems a little cliché. Leading by example is where the respect is earned. Managers should continually strive to set good examples, demonstrate their skills and knowledge, and aim to be high achievers. Once you gain the respect of the employees, they'll buy into your management direction and give their unconditional support.

Mentoring. In my opinion, a good leader must know how to share their knowledge and past experiences with their team. Some managers are guarded when it comes to their intellectual knowledge and feel that if they pass too much along that their jobs will be at jeopardy. I encourage you to put these insecurities to the side and openly pass on what you know. Sharing what you know not only gains respect from your coworkers, but it also allows them to do a better job.

Accept responsibility. Leaders need to take responsibility for the successes and failures of their team. This largely entails sharing the successes, but also involves absorbing the failures. This may seem contrary, as many managers inherently seek out a fall guy when failures occur. But effective leadership means leading from the front and showing the team that you're willing to step in for them when things get tough.

Putting it together

Let's face it—not everyone in a management role has the patience and ability to be good leaders. Some people are natural-born leaders, while others have to really work at it. I'm probably somewhere in between; parts of being a good leader come naturally to me, while other parts I really have to work at.

I've accomplished many great working relationships using the skills mentioned above. I've experienced first-hand the power trust, respect and loyalty provides in the workplace as it creates an excellent working environment and a team of cohesive coworkers who literally want to do a good job and contribute to company successes.

I may not be where I need to be in my current role, but I'm constantly working hard to reach good leadership status and doing what I can to build the team that respects one another and provides a productive environment where we can accomplish great things together. I encourage you to look at yourself and your management skills and find ways to improve how you manage others. You'll be happier and your team will become more cohesive and productive. **GT**

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