



WHAT MAKES A GOOD BOSS?

According to Rob Sheehan, director of executive education at the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership at the University of Maryland, “Being a good boss is important in any organization, but it’s particularly important for small business. With smaller businesses, you really have the opportunity to set the tone for the entire company.” There are several characteristics, traits, and attitudes that seem to be prevalent among executives that are viewed as “good bosses” by their employees. These include:

- Including all levels of employees in decision making
- Concentrating on the company’s mission, not just its ability to make money
- Demonstrating the value of learning new skills
- Encouraging employees to advance their careers
- Setting an example of a positive attitude and work ethic

Assigning Responsibilities

The organization of your small business will be determined by your determination of who should be doing what and when – in other words, assigning tasks and duties to your employees. At the center of any organization are its people and those people have to know what is expected of them in order to perform satisfactorily. Usually a small business will start with a few (maybe even one) person(s) performing all of the day-to-day functions. However, as the business grows it will be necessary to hire others to perform specific roles within the firm. As a manager, you will be required to recognize when new needs emerge and to hire the appropriate personnel to address those needs.

Business Teams

You should not be the only one responsible for the success of your small business. The ultimate in organization is the formation of a business team that allows you to delegate authority and, as a result, increase productivity. Your business team should consist of those employees who are in charge of the major functions of your organization.

To be effective, a business team must have a leader that is respected by all of the team members. In return, the leader must respect all of the member’s individual abilities. A team spirit should be evident as each member uses his or her strengths to compensate for the weaknesses of others.

Mistakes in the workplace should result in correction not retribution. Each member of a team should realize their own importance to the organization and feel free to explore other areas of activity.

Communication

Tips for Employers

A 2001 study analyzing 20,000 exit interviews revealed that the most common reason that people leave a job situation is poor supervision – basically, they had a bad boss. Probably the biggest factor contributing to the perception of poor leadership seemed to be poor communication skills. How can you as an employer improve your communication with your employees? Try out a few of the following suggestions:

- 1) Listen. Actually pay attention to what your employees are saying. As simple as this sounds, try this exercise; Tape a conversation then after you have finished communicating, try typing as much as you can of what the other person said. When you are finished, play the tape while reading your notes. See how accurate you’re listening and memory is.
- 2) Designate specific times to meet with your employees one-on-one at least twice a month. Not allowing interruptions during these meetings will convey to them that they have your undivided attention and that you value their input.
- 3) When changes are going to have to be made in the workplace, let those affected know as soon as possible. Tell them personally and don’t let them find out through the grapevine.
- 4) Let your employees know what you stand for. When they are aware of your value system, they will be able to make better decisions, or at least decisions that will be more pleasing to you.
- 5) Let your employees know how they are doing on a regular basis. Don’t let an employee find out that they are not performing up to your standards at their yearly performance review.
- 6) Improve your public speaking skills. Your credibility with your employees is directly tied to your ability to convey information to them successfully.
- 7) Don’t use e-mail to do your dirty work. Whenever a situation involves strong emotions, it should be dealt with in person.