

SERVICE MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

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FORWARD: A Note From Jim Johnson....

If you're a service manager of just about any ilk, there's a better-than-even chance that *one* of the reasons (there are many) you are in that position is because you were good at something else. That something else could have been installing or servicing heating and air conditioning equipment or appliances...or perhaps you started your career as a plumber, an electrician, an automotive technician, or in another craft. Whatever skills you demonstrated in your trade area of technical expertise, that's what they were: Trade or technical skills. And, that's good. After all, everyone wants to advance in their career, and one way to do that is to assume a supervisory or management position.

There's just one problem with this process. In the same way that it's likely that you "moved up" to your present position because of your technical expertise, it's also likely that you moved into that position without a great deal of opportunity for training and preparation in the areas of communication skills, customer service, dealing with different personalities, managing people and leading a team.

And sometimes, getting the information that you need in order to be as effective as possible at your new (or maybe even not-so-new) position, can be a difficult and time-consuming task. Even attending a one-day workshop on supervisory skills can be a major undertaking when you consider not only the up-front expense of attending the training, but also what it takes for you to take the time off (meaning: "get away from the phone") so you can concentrate on learning new skills, and then find the time to follow up so you can put what you learned to practical use.

Take heart. This E-Book is for you. It's a no-nonsense approach to being an effective supervisor, manager, department head or small business owner. You're sure to find something that will give you the tools you need to get your job done.

We're going to give you information and practical tools on how to do that. Some of what you'll read here will be enjoyable, even a little fun, and simple common sense, subtle things that might make you think, "Hmmm...I'll have to give that a try". And some things will hit hard. So hard, that at first, you may be tempted to dismiss the idea altogether. That can be

a normal response to new information that, on the surface, sounds either “too simple”, “too radical”, “too touchy-feely”, or looks as though it might “sound OK in theory, but in the ‘real world’ won’t work.”

But we want to point out that everything in this E-Book has been put into practice by somebody, somewhere, and it has worked, not just in theory, but in practice.

Will you adopt every idea you read here....put everything into practice in every situation you deal with in exactly the way it’s described? That’s not likely. Nor is it likely that you’ll agree totally with everything we say or suggest. That’s OK. Just keep an open mind and take the time to pause when you need to and think about your specific situation, or a specific person in your organization, and how something we said can benefit you or provide you with some insight on what to do about a specific person or situation in your organization. And then take what you want and leave what you don’t want behind. That’s the way you’ll get the most out of your investment of money and time.

SEGMENT ONE: TAKING OR STARTING OVER

A defendant was on trial for murder. There was strong evidence indicating his guilt, but there was no corpse. In his closing statement, the defense attorney decided that he had a foolproof way to ensure a verdict in favor of his client. “Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,” he said. “I have a surprise for you. Within one minute, the person that everyone thinks is dead will walk into this courtroom.”

He looked toward the courtroom door. The jurors were all stunned, and they sat transfixed, staring at the door. After a long minute, nothing happened. Finally the lawyer said, “Actually, I made it all up about the dead man walking in. But you all looked at the door with anticipation. So, that means you had reasonable doubt about the victim being killed, and if there is reasonable doubt, then you have to come back with a verdict of ‘not guilty.’”

When the jury came back after a short deliberation, they said “guilty.”

“What!” exclaimed the lawyer, “You couldn’t arrive at that conclusion if you had any reasonable doubt, and I saw all of you look at the door, which showed that you had reasonable doubt.”

“You’re right,” said the jury foreman, “you looked at the door, and we looked at the door, but your client didn’t.”

Whatever your specific situation in service management and supervision, you're facing some challenges, (among them being the person responsible for making sure that everybody you supervise knows what they're supposed to do in any given situation) and you need to know how to meet them. So here you are.... Maybe your situation is that you've always kept a good work ethic, strived to keep learning, dedicated yourself to doing your job in the best way possible, and you've been promoted. You've made the decision to take on your new responsibilities because that's the way you move up the income ladder, the way you keep moving ahead in your career. Or, maybe you've made the decision to leave an employer and get your own business started, and part of that is hiring, supervising and managing employees. Or, maybe you're not exactly brand new at this management thing and you're looking for information on how to do your job or manage your business more effectively than you have in the past.

And sometimes there are things you need to know and consider that are, well, not exactly comforting to know or consider when it comes to supervision, but, as they sometimes say in Texas..."If you have to swallow a bucket of frogs, you might as well get the biggest one done first", so we'll start out with some of that less than comforting stuff.

Some Hard Facts About Service Management/Supervision....

...Management is not a popularity contest.

...Management is not easy. That's why many people either don't do it well, or don't do it at all.

...Often, the biggest personal challenges we face as supervisors is overcoming fears....the fear of change, the fear of failure, and the fear of not having complete control over our lives.

...The only real "job security" we have is our knowledge and skills.

...A supervisor's best protection against lawsuits (yes, you *hate* the idea of having to deal with this issue, but you know you might *have to* sometime) is knowing the right thing to do and doing it consistently. 73% of employee versus employer lawsuits are won by the employee and the amount awarded can often be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

...15% of your success as a supervisor is related to your technical skills.

...85% of your success as a supervisor is related to your people skills.

...People in a work environment don't want to be managed. People want a leader, and a leader has to lead by example. (No, you won't be perfect all the time and you can be sure you'll be reminded when you're not, so just accept that.)

...It takes more than a desire to make more money or advance in your career to be an effective supervisor. It takes dedication, hard work, being open to constant self-examination, and a willingness to consider what everyone, whether you report to them or whether they report to you, has to offer in the way of advice, suggestions, and criticisms.

And, the hardest fact of all.....