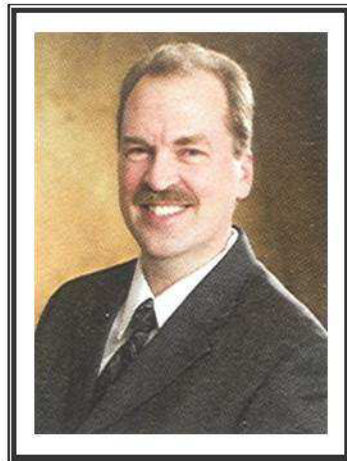


2009

Real Life Management

with Wes Friesen



As featured in

Mailing
systems technology

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Vision — Don't Leave Home Without It

"Without a vision, the people flounder." — Ancient Hebrew proverb

One of the first and foremost responsibilities of successful managers is developing a vision of a better future for their teams. Extensive research on the Best Practices of High Performing Leaders by the University of Michigan found that the best leaders "get everyone on the same page and focused on the purpose of the organization." The Gallup organization's research on the practices of the country's greatest managers found that one crucial best practice was to "set expectations, and define the right outcomes."

So how can you as a manager define the right outcomes, set a vision and get everybody on the team on the same page? The 360-degree approach is one wise strategy. Find out where your boss and the senior management want the organization to go, then determine how your team can help them get there. Coordinate with your peers and find ways to partner. Solicit participation from your team members — their participation leads to their buy-in and better quality decisions.

Great managers are aware of the concept of "stakeholder symmetry." Stakeholder symmetry recognizes that an organization has multiple stakeholders (e.g. investors, customers, employees, suppliers and community). The organization — and your team — should try to add value to each stakeholder and maintain a reasonable balance between their competing interests.

Once the right outcomes are defined, great managers then let each person find his own route toward the outcomes, within specified parameters. Great managers don't micro-manage, but they do define steps to ensure quality, safety and compliance with corporate policies and applicable laws.

The final outcome for your team should include a vision or mission statement that helps inspire your team to strive for excellence. Following is the Mission Statement of the Print & Mail Services team at Portland General Electric:

Mission: Our mission is to be a "world-class" provider of printing and mailing products and services. We desire to be recognized as a premier service provider that is comparable to any operation of similar size anywhere in the country.

Our purpose is to provide timely, high-quality products and services at a cost equal to or lower than any other potential provider. We desire to achieve a consistently high level of customer satisfaction and to maintain a working environment that dignifies and motivates our staff.

Here is a final quote: "You can choose to be mediocre, or you can choose to strive for excellence... the choice is yours." Good luck as you and your team intentionally strive for excellence!



Wes Friesen is the Manager of Revenue Collection & Community Offices for Portland General Electric, a utility in Portland, Oregon, that serves over 820,000 customers. Wes teaches university classes and is a featured speaker at national conferences such as National Postal Forum, MailCom, IPMA and XPLOR. He manages the bill production and payment processing teams with the able assistance of supervisors Eric Houger, Barbara Byers, Gil Rodriguez and Elyssia Carlblom. Wes can be contacted via email at Wes.Friesen@pgn.com. ■

Extra Insight

Supplement the Mission Statement with annual and quarterly goals and several performance metrics covering all important areas of performance (e.g. cost, timeliness, quality, customer satisfaction and safety). Review progress on a monthly basis, discuss results with your team and celebrate improvements and the reaching of goals. The outcome will be a highly motivated team working together for common purposes.

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Recognition — The Missing Ingredient to Great Results

Research has led to the development of what some have called the "Greatest Management Principle in the World" — you get what you reward. Sincere, regular and positive recognition and rewarding of desired behaviors is common sense — but not common practice. A recent Gallup poll of thousands of employees found that 65% claimed to have received no praise or recognition the past year!

Everyone likes to be recognized and shown appreciation. William James was one of the most respected psychologists who ever lived. After a lifetime of research and practice, he concluded that most people's greatest need is the need for appreciation. Ongoing recognition and praise makes a person feel appreciated, important and stimulates the intrinsic motivation to excel. On the other hand, a recent survey by Robert Half Associates showed that the number-one reason for leaving a company was "limited recognition and praise."

There are specific actions we can take to improve our recognition practices. Following are the "Top Ten Ways to Motivate Employees" (adopted from recognition expert Bob Nelson's latest book entitled *Motivating Today's Employees*):

1) Provide Personal Thanks. Mark Twain said that, "He could go two months on just one compliment." JRR Tolkien was quoted as saying, "Kind words cost little, but are worth much." A landmark research study showed the number one thing that employees wanted was "full appreciation for work done."

2) Make Time for Employees. What kind of message do we send when we meet with and listen to employees? That we care. John Maxwell captures the importance when he says, "People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care."

3) Provide Specific Feedback. Employees want to know how they are personally doing and how the department and organization are doing. Also, catch people doing things right, and thank them!

4) Create an Open (and Fun) Environment. Having an open, fun and trusting environment helps build a sense of camaraderie and encourages new ideas and innovation.

5) Provide Information. If we don't provide information, a vacuum is created which is filled by the "rumor mill" — which is invariably negative. The three keys to being a great manager are "communication, communication and communication," according to the heralded CEO of Portland General, Peggy Fowler.

6) Involve Employees in Decisions. Involving employees in decisions that impact them results in better quality decisions.

7) Reward High Performers. Promoting and rewarding people based on their performance (not politics) sends the right signals. Also, dealing with poor performers so they improve or leave strengthens the team and really helps morale.

8) Develop a Sense of Ownership. Provide employees a sense of ownership in their work and in their work environment.

9) Give Chances to Grow and Learn. Most employees desire to grow and learn — and helping them recognize their contributions and potential.

10) Celebrate Successes. Taking the time to celebrate the successes of individuals, the team and the organization builds morale and the motivation to strive for future successes.

Many of us have good intentions to show more recognition — but often fall short. The ideas listed above are just a few ways to help build recognition into our regular routines.

As Saint Paul said, "Give everyone what you owe him ... if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Romans 13:7). Good luck to you as you recognize your employees and let them know how much you appreciate them! ■

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Recent Gallup research found that individuals who receive regular recognition and praise:

- increase their individual productivity
- increase engagement among their colleagues
- are more likely to stay with their organization
- receive higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers
- have better safety records and fewer accidents on the job

Real Life Management

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Managing Operations in Tough Economic Times

The recession has impacted us all — our companies, our teams and our personal lives have all felt the hit (anybody brave enough to look at your 401k balance lately?). How can we be more effective managers in the tough times we live in? Here are some tools and techniques that may prove useful.

1. **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Our employees want to hear both the positive and negative news from us. If we fail to communicate, a vacuum is created — and that vacuum is filled by the “rumor mill,” which invariably is negative and destructive to morale and motivation.
2. **Give your people hope.** Napoleon said, “Great leaders are dealers in hope.” We don’t want to sugarcoat current realities, but we can share the strategies in motion to make the future brighter. We can also remind people that every prior recession has been followed by several years of growth and prosperity.
3. **Dole out “hugs” and practice “random acts of kindness.”** As leaders, we can generously give out verbal, written and even physical “hugs” to our team members. What the great philosopher Plato said years ago is especially relevant today: “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.” Putting our emotional intelligence to work will help build camaraderie and ease a bit of the pain that people are feeling.
4. **Manage your costs.** Everybody is feeling the pressure to hold the line on costs or even lower costs. One key to manage costs is to invite your employees into the process. It’s surprising the good ideas that employees come up with if you are candid with them and invite their participation. For example, my company (Portland General Electric) needed to cut our 2009 Operating Budget by \$25 million. We shared the need with employees, brainstormed and came up with the budget cuts without any employee layoffs.

Here are a few cost-saving ideas my teams have implemented: reduction of overtime by process improvements and awareness of need to cut back; reduced employee business expenses by scaling back purchased food and outside meals

— in some cases, food has been eliminated, and in other cases, employees have brought in food items on their own dime. We are also saving on training and development costs by focusing on the most value-added uses of our training dollars — such as PCC events and resources. One team eliminated a recently vacated position by coming up with process improvements and unanimously agreed to fill in the gap.

5. **Consider in-sourcing or outsourcing.** In-sourcing involves bringing in work from another company. If you have a well-managed operation and have available capacity, bringing in external work can leverage your assets and provide a means to subsidize your costs.

Another alternative to consider is outsourcing. Ask the following questions: Do we have a high quality and low cost in-plant operation? Is our company committed to the in-plant operation and keeping up with best practices and industry trends? Is our company willing to invest in vintage replacement of equipment? If you have any “no” answers, outsourcing the operation to a vendor or another in-plant may be the best choice.

6. **Build up morale and productivity through recognition.** Research over the years has led to the development of what some have called the “Greatest Management Principle in the World”: you get what you reward. Sincere, regular and positive recognition and rewarding of desired behaviors is common sense — but not common practice.

Our economic tough times will eventually come to an end. Meanwhile, we have the opportunity to make a positive difference within our organization. Let me close with a favorite quote from Vince Lombardi. “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” Now is the time for managers to get going! ■

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Recognition Is Key

Ongoing recognition and praise make a person feel appreciated, important and stimulates the intrinsic motivation to excel. Recent Gallup research found that individuals who receive regular recognition and praise:

- Increase their individual productivity
- Increase engagement among their colleagues

- Are more likely to stay with their organization
- Receive higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers
- Have better safety records and fewer accidents on the job

Fact: Sadly, over 65% of respondents have received no recognition from management in the past year!

Real Life Management

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Best Practices of Great Managers

Editor's Note: This is part one of a two-part series on the four best practices of general managers. We will cover two in this article and two in the next.

Trying to improve our management capabilities is important to the success of our organizations. Many people in the human resources field are telling us that the number-one challenge facing organizations in the years ahead is the ability to attract and retain talented employees. This is becoming more challenging due to the aging demographics facing our nation.

So how do we become better managers? One tool we have is to learn and apply what research tells us. The Gallup organization has been engaged in employee and management research for over 25

Studies Show: According to the research, **two important considerations of great managers are:**

Picking People: Select for Talent

Setting Expectations: Define the Right Outcomes

years and has collected information from over one million employees and interviewed thousands of managers. Their studies have revealed to us what the world's top performing managers do — and it boils down to four major activities (best practices).

Picking People: Select for Talent

The first key activity involves picking people well, focusing on their talents. Talent has been defined as the "recurring pattern of thought, feeling or behavior that can be productively applied." Skills can be learned, knowledge can be gained, but talent is more "hardwired" and tougher to teach.

One approach in looking for talented people for our teams is to only hire "ACEs." ACE is an acronym where the "A" stands for Attitude. Look for people who have a positive attitude and who are committed, teachable and care for people.

"C" stands for Character. Does character count? As an employee of a company that has been owned by Enron, I would say an emphatic "yes!" Look for people that exhibit integrity and honesty.

"E" stands for enthusiasm. Is apathy and cynicism contagious? Yes! Is enthusiasm contagious? Yes! What makes for stronger and more productive teams? The answer is obvious. Here is the bottom line: If you hire ACEs for your team (and help existing employees develop into ACEs) — your team will be successful!

Set Expectations: Define the Right Outcomes

The second key is to set expectations, which is to define the right outcomes. Great managers focus their people toward performance by defining the right outcomes. How do you define the right outcomes? The 360-degree approach is one wise strategy. Find out where your boss and the senior management want the organization to go, then determine how your team can help them get there. Coordinate with your peers, and find ways to partner. Solicit participation from your team members — their participation leads to their buy-in and higher quality decisions. Once the right outcomes are defined, great managers then let each person find his own route toward the outcomes, within specified parameters. Great managers don't micro-manage, but they do define steps to ensure quality, safety and compliance with corporate policies and applicable laws.

Great managers are aware of the concept of "stakeholder symmetry." Stakeholder symmetry recognizes that an organization has multiple stakeholders (e.g. investors, customers, employees, suppliers, community). The organization should try to add value to each stakeholder and maintain a reasonable balance between their competing interests.

None of us are perfect managers, but we can all get better! Good luck as you continue on your path to being a better manager! ■

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How Do They Do It?

How do organizations succeed at attracting and retaining the talent they need to prosper? Studies tell us that talented employees **want and need great managers**. How long employees stay and

how productive they are is primarily determined by the relationship with their immediate supervisor. The **number-one** reason why talented people leave is because they had a poor relationship with their boss.

Real Life Management

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Best Practices of Great Managers

Last issue, we touched on the first two components of being a great manager: picking people (selecting for talent) and setting expectations (defining the right outcomes). If you missed that issue, feel free to check out the digital issue online at www.MailingSystemsTechnology.com.

In this issue, we'll cover the last two attributes of a great manager. It's important for managers to motivate people (focusing on their strengths) and developing people (finding the right fit). But that is easier said than done, right? You may be surprised!

Motivate People: Focus on Strengths

The key is to motivate people in part by focusing on each person's strengths. Great managers focus and use people's strengths and manage around their weaknesses. Avoid the tendency to try and "fix" people. Instead, do everything you can to help each person cultivate his or her talents and become more of what he or she already is.

Develop People: Find the Right Fit

The final key is to develop people by helping find the right fit. Great managers steer employees toward roles where the employee has the greatest chance of success. Jim Collin's book *Good to Great* chronicles an intensive research effort that identified and analyzed the nation's top long-term performing companies. One of the characteristics of these exceptional performing companies is that they "got the right people on the bus, and the wrong people off it." In other words, the very top performing companies find the right people for the right roles and then let these people determine strategy and use their talents.

One practical tool that may be helpful is the Strengths Interview (from the book *First, Break all the Rules* by Buckingham and Coffman, which is an excellent source of research results). You can use this interview (see sidebar) with new members on your team, and you can use this annually with existing team members.

Once you have determined that you have an employee that is a good fit for your team, there are some practical tools that can

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

1. What did you enjoy most about your previous work experience? What brought you here? (If an existing employee): What keeps you here?
2. What do you think your strengths are?
3. What about your weaknesses?
4. What are your goals for your current role?
5. How often do you like to meet with me to discuss your progress? Are you the kind of person who will tell me how you are feeling, or will I have to ask?
6. Do you have any personal goals or commitments you would like to tell me about?
7. What is the best praise you ever received? What made it so good?
8. Have you had any really productive partnerships or mentors? Why do you think these relationships worked so well for you?
9. What are your future goals, your career goals? Are there any particular skills you want to learn? Are there some specific challenges you want to experience? How can I help?
10. Is there anything else you want to talk about that might help us work well together?

help you in the development process. Tools include cross-training, attendance at conferences like the National Postal Forum, reading trade journals like *Mailing Systems Technology*, involvement in trade organizations like the local PCC, university courses, local seminars — the list goes on.

None of us are perfect managers — but we can all get better. Good luck as you continue on your path to being a better manager! ■

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FOUR KEY BEST PRACTICES OF GREAT MANAGERS

According to the research, the four key activities of great managers are:

Picking People: Select for Talent

Set Expectations: Define the Right Outcomes

Motivate People: Focus on Strengths

Develop People: Find the Right Fit

Real Life Management

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Are You a Serving Leader or a Self-Serving Leader?

"Everyone can be great because everyone can serve." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

Organizations and teams are crying out for effective leaders. The most effective and positive leaders are those that understand and practice the philosophy of "servant leadership." Servant leaders feel their role is to serve others — employees, customers and other key stakeholders. If you think about the most respected and effective leaders you know, chances are, they saw themselves as "serving leaders," not "self-serving leaders." The most notable leaders throughout history, such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa embraced the philosophy stated by Jesus that "anybody wanting to be the leader must first be the servant. If you want to lead, you must serve."

One of my favorite definitions of leadership is, "Leadership is the skill of influencing people to work enthusiastically towards goals that are identified as being for the common good." Do you want to be an influential leader? I suggest you learn and apply the following "SERVE" model (based on Ken Blanchard's *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*):

- See the Future
- Engage and Develop Others
- Reinvent Continuously
- Value Results and Relationships
- Embody the Values

See the Future involves developing a compelling vision that stirs passion within you — and the people on your team. Invite participation from your team members about your team's purpose, values and goals. Consider how you can add value for your key stakeholders, such as customers, employees and shareholders/owners. Give serious thought to where you and the team would like to be several years in the future — then paint a picture of a better future that people can rally around.

Engage and Develop Others involves having the right people in the right roles, fully engaged to achieve the future. Identify a person's strengths (refer to "Ask the Right Questions" survey in my column last issue) and find a role that leverages those strengths. I agree with Peter Drucker, who said, "The leader's objective is to leverage the strengths of people and make their weaknesses become irrelevant." We have many tools available to help develop people — including classes, cross training, special assignments, mentoring — the list goes on.

Reinvent Continuously is based on the concepts of continuous learning and continuous improvement. Learning and improvement starts with us first — we need to read, attend conferences, be involved with professional organizations and model the behavior for team members. We need to regularly evaluate our systems and processes and keep asking, "Can we do it better, faster and for less? Can we improve the quality of our products and services?"

Value Results and Relationships — our job as leaders is to get results that add value to the organization and its stakeholders. But how we get results is very important, and servant leaders realize that people are our most valuable resource and that developing positive relationships is absolutely essential. Servant leaders know that "people will not give you their hand until they see your heart." I try to live out my "3 Rs" approach with people in my life: *Recognize* people for who they are and for what they do; *Reward* in tangible and intangible ways whenever you can; and show *Respect* and practice the golden rule.

Embody the Values that you and your organization deem important. A great example is how my company (Portland General) survived and even thrived, despite being owned by Enron. Our common values were the glue that kept us focused and together: Be Accountable; Dignify People; Make the Right Thing Happen; Positive Attitude; Team Behavior; and Earn Trust. Values can drive the corporate culture and provide a strong foundation for developing your vision. ■

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Key Take-Away:

Being a servant leader is rewarding for the people

you serve — and for you. Let me close with a quote from Dr. Albert Schweitzer. "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve."