

Leader-managers essay sample

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In the beginning there was the word: leader-managers. I will begin this essay by briefly differentiate between a leader and a manager. A manager has subordinates, meaning he has power over the people under him, while a leader has followers, people who are willing to follow and not obliged to. Huband (1992) wrote that a manager uses his authority as a boss to gain power while a leader uses his charisma to be a role model. In this essay, we will assume that a manager and a leader is the same person, as in the real world, many people are both. In the modern business world, there are many problems that a manger might face as the world gets more and more complex. To gain a competitive edge, managers are under pressure to perform and being a good manager might not be hard but being a great one is what makes the difference.

The three challenges that I decided to write about are the challenges of retention, effective communication and resolving conflict. First I will talk about the challenge of retention, and what managers do to retain employees.

Retention means to keep employees from leaving the organization.

Retention is a challenge managers are facing as talented employees are hard to find, and even harder to keep. In a competitive market, talented employees are sought after by many competitive organizations. Managers must understand that it is cheaper to develop a good employee than to spend money hiring one and that, and that good employees are as valuable and hard to replace as a loyal customer (Nohria, Joyce & Roberson 2003).

Retention also makes sure that managers do not always have to go through the trouble of recruiting and re-training new employees. An obvious way to

retain an employee is to keep him or her happy and motivated. I realized that retention and motivation are on the same boat as both have to do with keeping employees happy. A recent poll done by Paton (2007) tells us that employee retention is at the highest priority for most firms in the US.

Motivation is one of the most effective ways to keep an employee loyal and productive. There are many ways to motivate employees such as rewards and incentives, giving them chance for promotion, give them more responsibility or recognition, job security and much more. Different employees are motivated by different things. One of the most influential motivational theories is Maslow's hierarchy of needs (appendix 1). Maslow's theory is a hierarchy of things employees look out for in a work place. In the lowest hierarchy are the physiological needs, followed by the safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs and finally the self-actualization needs. Physiological needs are the basic needs like food, shelter and clothing. Usually physiological needs can be satisfied by money as money can provide us with food, shelter and clothing. Other than money, people would also be motivated by rewards and incentive schemes. Incentive and rewards schemes motivate and express how valuable employees are to the organization (Your People Manager 2004). Example of incentive schemes are bonuses and extra staff holidays.

Safety needs or security needs are the need to be secure, both at home and in the work place. To do this, managers can offer job security and giving them medical benefits like dental plans. Social needs are the need to belong to a group and overcome loneliness. This could be achieved in the work place by creating a friendly work environment free from discriminations.

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Managers can also organize social events for employees to socialize or have a good induction program for new employees. Self-esteem needs are the need to be respected or recognized by their peers. Managers can achieve this by recognizing and praising employees for a job well done. Another way is promoting or giving employees special titles like project manager or team manager.

Lastly, self-actualization needs are the need of realizing one's own potential or self-fulfillment. This could be done through promotion as promotion give employees chance to realize their own potential. Managers could also give employees more freedom in the way they do their job. In Maslow's theory, he believes that people often try to satisfy the lower level of needs first, and then advances to the next level of needs.

Managers need to understand the needs of the employees and know how to satisfy all level of needs as, if an employee believes that any of those needs couldn't be achieve in the current organization, he or she will most likely lose the motivation to work in that organization. In short, a manager needs to know how to motivate the employees. Maslow's theory are supported by Huband (1992) as he wrote that an effective manager must recognize that money or rewards are not always the main motivator and that most managers themselves are motivated by achievement, recognition, challenging work, advancement, job growth, and responsibility. This shows that higher level of needs is more important than the lower level of needs once you have satisfied them. To further support this are the work of Shenkel and Gardner (2004) who found out that to retain good employees, managers must offer than more than just decent wages and benefits. Shenkel and <https://assignbuster.com/leader-managers-essay-sample/>

Gardner (2004) did a poll and found out that positive, caring relationships, recognition of achievement, pride in the organization and opportunities for growth and advancement are the major factor in the employees staying in the organization. Those four factors are related to social needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization needs. Hughes (2003) also states that although rewards and incentives are vital, employees want to feel successful and professionally fulfilled, and these factors are keys to retention and long-term loyalty.

Training is another way to retain employees. According to Fast (2004), given proper training and a chance for promotion or development, most employees are happy to stay in their current job. Training makes an employee think that the organization value the employee enough to spend the organization's money for the employee's training. This can be further supported by Vowler (2005) who wrote that training is not only a way to retain employees but also a way to avoid recruitment costs and reduce absenteeism. Sending employees for further education also helps in retaining employees and shows that the organization values the employees.

Lack of loyalty is mostly because of the company and not because of the employees (Martin 2007). What it means is that such company is not doing enough to retain employees. Nohria, Joyce & Roberson (2003) wrote that good successful companies are the one that dedicate time and resources to building and retaining an already existing effective workforce and management team. Staff retention does not always have to be expensive as effective communication is also a way to retain and motivate employees,

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which will be discussed in the next section. Mentoring is also another way. Hughes (2003) wrote that mentoring helps the induction process for new employees and also demonstrates the organization's commitment to develop the employees. Mentoring can be done by pairing up newcomers or up-and-coming employees with an experienced respected employee (mentor) in the organization. This way it helps the employee's development and gives the mentor a chance to help other people (self-actualization needs).

The second challenge I would talk about is the problems relation to effective communication. Bean (2002) wrote that effective communication can promote employee retention while helping the business run more efficiently and build a good relationship with customers. There are two types of communication: verbal and non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communications are message we sent without speaking and this includes body language or facial expression. Non-verbal communications are as important as verbal communications as a lot could be perceived by our facial expression alone. Effective communication is difficult because there are many ways to decode a simple message. For example, a simple message such as 'What do you need?' can be conveyed as an innocent question or a hostile one depending on the tone or the facial expression of the communicator. Getting your message across the way you meant it is the basic idea of effective communication. There are many barriers to effective communication such as language, cultural differences or even assumptions.

The choice of language in which a sender uses is very important as when the wrong choices of word or language are used, misinterpretation will likely occur. Understanding cultural differences is also vital for managers as

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different culture have different culture, interpretation of words and body-language. A good theory to understand cultural differences is the Hofstede's cultural dimension theory. For example in many eastern countries, building relationships are as vital as closing a deal itself. Dvorak (2006)

wrote that most western companies would easily switch suppliers to cut cost while in most Asian countries, it would be harder to do that as managers or executives often have longstanding or personal relationships with their counterparts at suppliers. Assumption is a common barrier to effective communication. Often, we assume that everyone feels the same or has the same opinions as us. An example would be a manager's assumption that most employees are motivated by money alone, and not understanding the higher level of needs like self-esteem and self-actualization needs. Another good example of how people tend to receive message differently from different people is an example of a message sent by a manager or his peers. A message such as ' Can you help me in doing this task?' can be received differently, depending on who the sender is. Obviously, a manager asking that would most likely be perceived as a command from above authority while if coming from his fellow peers, it would be just a request for help.

Paying attention to the way other communicate in an organization and the context of a message, having a good communication channel and allowing opportunities for feedback are ways to improve communication in an organization (US Fed News Service, Including US State News 2007). Huband (1992) wrote that an effective manager is a good communicator and for communication to be effective, feedbacks are needed to ensure understanding between managers and employees. Employee's feedbacks

and opinions are important for effective communication as this promotes discussion and interaction within the organization. Managers should always encourage communication and have good channel of communication throughout the organization. Communication should not be obstructed regardless of the level of hierarchy held by personnel in the organization. Dwyer (2005) wrote that to avoid assumptions, we should always communicate how we feel. For example, Bob made a joke about a serious issue and everybody had a good laugh. John might feel offended but does not show or talk about it. To prevent misunderstanding, John should talk to Bob about it and say that he has been offended as Bob just assume that John is fine with the joke. This will improve relationship between them as Bob will understand John a little more. If John decided to keep it and never talk about it, he might slowly grow to dislike Bob. It is a misunderstanding as Bob was just joking and did not mean to offend anyone. Marshall (2005) further supports this view as she wrote “ we need to learn to speak our minds while not alienating our co-workers.” Marshall (2005) also states that ineffective communication will cause employees to be demotivated, reduce productivity and cause resentment among employees.

Manager should also recognize the skill of effective listening and how it helps effective communication. Many people think listening is easy but it is actually not. The basic rule of effective listening is that two people should never talk at once as effective communication can only occur when someone is actually listening. An effective listener will not talk when someone is talking, look at the person talking to him, absorb and comprehend the

message and then reply. Rega (2000) identify not taking an effort to listen and being distracted by the way the person talks as common mistakes of listening effectively. Managers should understand this and concentrate when listening to employees and not worry about how the person talks. Leftwich (2005) wrote that there is a difference between hearing and listening.

Listening is when you make an effort to listen and fully understand the message while hearing is just receiving the message, and trying to tune it out of your mind, for example employees being lectured by the manager. The employee is hearing what the manager is saying but not taking any of the messages in. To avoid this, the manager should know how to communicate properly with the employee. Instead of lecturing him, he should engage in a conversation and talk about the problem, not lecture.

Bean (2002) wrote that effective communication can be introduced in an organization using a 3 step procedure: choose a system, develop a procedure and finally follow the procedure. The first step, choosing a system means to choose a channel of communication that fits the organization, for example using email. The second step is to develop a procedure, for example, everyone in the organization should check their email daily as a requirement. The third step is to follow the procedure and make checking email daily as a habit and part of the corporate culture. Different organizations have different communication styles and methods. Managers have to know how to use communication properly and use it as a way to motivate and build relationships. Effective communication will also reduce conflict between employees in the workplace.

The third challenge that I will write is the challenge of resolving conflict. Conflict in the workplace is almost inevitable as people have different opinions, ideas or personalities. The most common reason for conflict are identified as Gatlin, Wysocki & Kepne (2002) identified conflicting needs, conflicting styles, conflicting perception, conflicting goals, conflicting pressures, conflicting roles, different personal values and unpredictable policies as the main reason for conflict in a workplace.

There are five strategies that can be used to manage conflict and this is shown in the Thomas & Kilmann's Conflict Management Style Model (appendix 2). In the model we have five strategies, which are assertive (collaboration), compromise, aggressive (competition), accommodation and avoidance. Collaboration is a win-win strategy, which is used when concern for others and concern self are high. This is usually the best approach to manage conflict; however it takes a lot of time and effort. What it does is find the best solution for both parties. Managers can do this by effective listening and communicating without being threatening. Compromise is when both parties meet in the middle and accept a solution which favors no one. Managers must know how to negotiate and be as fair as possible in this strategy. Adopting the aggressive (competition) strategy is about being aggressive and people adopting this strategy only care about personal gain while giving little concern for others. Aggressive strategies usually will lead to arguments and resentment if both parties decided to use aggressive strategy. Accommodation strategy is when concern for one-self is low and are ready to give in to others' demands. This is a good strategy to keep harmony in a work place but a manager shouldn't use this strategy often as

he will lose power. The last strategy is the avoidance strategy which is trying to avoid resolution of conflict at all. This is the worst strategy out of the five as avoiding resolution of conflict will cause build-up resentment inside.

Gliken (2007) wrote that employees should resolve a dispute as soon as it starts. This is further supported by Rau-Foster (2000) who wrote that “unresolved conflict can result in feelings of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, hopelessness, depression, and other emotions.”

Out of the five strategies, managers should always try to use collaboration and compromise strategy as both strategies help with finding the best solution for both parties. Effective managers should be able to put other’s needs in par with their own or even at certain time, use accommodating strategy to put other’s concern ahead. When solving conflict, managers should always remain calm and fair if conflicts are between employees. As we have discussed, effective communication is one of the best way to resolve conflict. Managers should try to make employees talk about their problems with each other and try to find a good solution. Managers should always try to resolve conflict and not avoid them. Gliken (2007) wrote that we should not assume that people don’t want to resolve conflict. Conflict is not all that negative as it could indeed foster relationship after resolving it. To properly resolve conflict managers should understand that every employee is different and that causes conflicts. A great manager should know all his employees well and know how to resolve conflict between his employees.

The challenges of retention, effective communication and resolving conflicts are complex challenges that leader-managers face everyday in the

workplace. There is no one sure method to solve the each of the problems but as mentioned above, an effective leader-manager should be a good communicator, a good motivator and understand the needs and personality of each and every one of the employees under him or her.

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APPENDIX 1

Sources: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/facts/96-001.htm>

APPENDIX 2

THOMAS & KILMANN'S CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE MODEL

Sources: <http://www.mftrou.com/workplace-conflict-management-strategy.html>