Management

Rethinking All The Rules Everyday we are bombarded by the words diversity, networking, and globalization. Yet, how many have a clear definition for any one of these terms? Recent writers have approached the subject and given managers some of the tools needed to begin searching for the meaning. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) have further laid the groundwork by validating the necessity of thinking of management as a multi-dimensional task rather than a narrowly defined style (p. 27). The increasing demands made on managers require that they look well beyond the simple act of meeting a goal or quota. Diversity, gender, and philosophy are becoming increasingly important variables for a manager to base decisions on (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001, p. 160). Its imperative that they be able to act, react, and interact in a management environment where they may seem to have little control, yet are actively engaged in command.

Lets face it. The goal is the bottom line, the bottom line is the goal and getting there requires that a company maintain a workforce that is highly productive. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) assert that the role of the manager is crucial in providing the company with the four vital signs of a healthy business; Productivity, Profitability, Retention, and Customer Satisfaction (p. 31). Yet, all of these key components are influenced by the differing perceptions each employee has of their own role. Though some points may overlap, it is striking that the points most influenced by managers are also related to employee satisfaction and retention (Buckingham, et. al., 1999, p. 33). These points will vary across the workforce and will manifest as ability and readiness to perform a given task (Hersey, et. al., 2001, p. 176).

Once again, the manager will have to maintain control over the resource. In

the case of ability, two major components are knowledge and skill (Hersey, et. al, 2001, p. 176). Having the materials, knowing what is expected, and the opportunity to excel are also components that make up greater employee satisfaction (Buckingham, et. al., 1999, p. 34). In fact the way to safeguard against under-achieving employees in complacent positions is to enhance employee status through ongoing training programs (Hersey, et. al., 2001, p. 168). This insures that the workforce has the necessary ability to do the job and a greater motivation to do the task.

The willingness of an employee to perform will also be tested. An employee requires a duty to their position, assurance that they have the ability, and a desire to do the job (Hersey, et. al, 2001, p. 177). These are the same qualities that show up time and again on Buckingham and Coffmans (1999) list of " core elements" for a strong workforce (p. 28). These traits are inter-dependent and do not act alone, and all affect the readiness of the workforce (Hersey, et. al., 2001, p. 177). Likewise, cultural and organizational philosophies may make it difficult for the manager to discern levels of employee readiness. Forces that only seem to be beyond the scope of the manager make it even more challenging to choose a leadership role and management style in todays constantly fluid environment (Hersey, et. al., 2001, p. 161).

Yet, these are the challenges that face the leadership of the 21st century. The multi-dimensional role of style, leadership, and power, interplay to generate unique approaches to attaining the bottom-line. The manager not only needs to know how to evaluate and read his employees correctly, they both need the flexibility to move through the dimensions as needed. The style of the leader is largely set by the perception of the followers (Hersey,

et. al., 2001, p. 149). The followers opinions are set by the manager in the abstract forms of encouragement and praise (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999, p. 34). And the multi-dimensional role of management is a feedback loop that links leadership and followers to a common goal, the bottom line.

References

Buckingham, M., & Coffman, C. (1999). First break all the rules. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hersey, P., Blanchard, K., & Johnson, D. E. (2001). Management of organizational behavior: Leading human resources (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.