

Zapp book report

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ZAPP book report 11/24/09 ZAPP The Lightning of EMPOWERMENT, by William C. Byham Ph. D.

and Jeff Cox presents a story of different problems that managers/supervisors face and how they deal with the problems. The book shows how an autocratic supervisor would deal with a problem compared to a participative supervisor would handle the problems. The story shows the contrast between a supervisor that ZAPPS (empowers) her employees and a supervisor that SAPPS his employees by his interactions and management style with the employees.

The author takes a fictitious workplace that probably resembles many work environments that we have all experience at one time or another. ZAPP The Lightning of EMPOWERMENT is about the complexity of human relations in the work place. The book examines the workers and the managers' performance as it relates to employee empowerment, the employees feelings and sense of worth to the company.

In this workplace the authors were able to show that workers and/or managers that felt left out, not included and unimportant. Byham also shows how misinformation and the autocratic leadership style were detrimental to the performance of the work group.

The dictatorial style of leadership also had the ability to lower the morale of the employees. They were actually SAPPED instead of ZAPPED. Ralph invented a machine called the Rapholator which allowed him to go to the 12th dimension to have a look at the work environment as an outsider.

The ability to view the work environment as an outsider allowed Ralph to see the problems that occurred and how the supervisors and managers reacted to the problem. Ralph was able to see and hear the communications between different supervisors and employees and the effect it had on them.

Ralph decided that his boss, Joe, needed to see what he was seeing when he went to the 12th dimension. Ralph and Joe were able to observe how employees being ZAPPED made Lucy's department run smoothly. Lucy's employees were included in the day to day decision making and problem solving.

Lucy had gained her employees trust, she made them responsible for their work and she empowered her employees to solve problems. Lucy used the four basic steps that are the ground work for ZAPPING her employees, the steps are Enhance Self-Esteem, Listen and Respond with Empathy, Share Thoughts and Feelings, Encourage Involvement. It has been my experience working in a management position that listening and responding with empathy is the most important step in the process of creating ZAPP.

Employees want to know that they are being heard, that their concerns are taken seriously and that the management and the company care about the employees. I believe that employees seek to have 3rd party representation such as a union when they feel their voice is not being heard. Open, honest and respectful communication will go a long way towards maintaining the relationship between the company and its employees while avoiding the need for a third party to represent the employees.

The other important aspect to the story is the power of SAPP. SAPP occurs when employees are not getting the encouragement or involvement from their supervisor. The Byham and Cox emphasize how small things that supervisors do or say can have negative effect on the employees in the work place. Thus comes the term SAPP. When employees lose the enthusiasm and desire to excel or move forward in the work place, they are considered to be SAPPED. Supervisors and managers must be careful when communicating with their employees to prevent SAPPING them.

Any actions or communications by a supervisor that is contradictory to the four basic steps of creating ZAPP will in fact create SAPP. The authors show how Joe and his management style are causing SAPP in his department. Joe believes he is the boss, he's in charge and everyone takes orders from him. Joe's style certainly defines the autocratic or dictatorial leadership style. Joe has a Theory X attitude at the beginning of the story but after observing Lucy, the supervisor of Dept Z, Joe slowly changes his attitude.

Lucy has a Theory Y attitude which Joe tries to emulate through trial and error.

He eventually gets there but he has difficulty getting the employees to respond along the way. Joe seems to take one step forward and two steps back before finally “ getting it”. Lucy's attitude and management style is a case study of the Pygmalion Effect. The PE states that workers and their performance will reflect the supervisors' expectations. The effect can be a positive or a negative depending on the attitude and expectations of the supervisor.

Finally the authors illustrate that it is vital that experienced managers coach other managers how to use and improve their ZAPP skills.

Too often I have personally observed supervisors and managers that are struggling because of the way they communicate and interact with their employees. I always attempt to provide feedback when I observe a supervisor/employee interaction that could have been communicated differently or some action could have been taken differently. Front Line Supervisors are the representatives of the company and are in the most difficult position as far as trying to keep the employees happy, motivated and performing at a high level as well as keeping upper management satisfied.