

As a manager, would you really like to know what to do or not do to more effectively lead and manage your team? If you could add to your experience base 58 examples of actions taken by other managers in situations you have or will encounter, would it be worth it? If so, then this book gives you that opportunity. It coaches you in how to increase your leadership competence and confidence.

Leadership Lessons...Proven on the Front Line

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LEADERSHIP
LESSONS...
PROVEN ON
THE
FRONT LINE

BEVERLY
FORTENBERRY

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Change Leaders Needed

Whether you want to or not, you need to continually reinvent your business in order to stay in business. Realizing this, senior management is quick to talk about the ‘need for change’, but very often they are disappointed in the results of their change initiatives. Why is this?

One of the key reasons is because championing change does not often appear in the job description of most managers, including the CEO’s. Managers often aren’t encouraged to ‘think outside the box’ and when they do, they frequently are not rewarded for their efforts. The focus is typically on quarterly results, and not as much on what they can do at their level to improve performance.

So if you want to create an organization that is continually engaged in perfecting the ‘customer experience’ through any number of change initiatives, you have to start by making every manager at every level an advocate for change, a Change Agent. How do you do this?

Start by asking yourself if your managers know that you expect them to embrace change, support it, and even lead it. Is this an expectation of their jobs?

Then, ask yourself if you demonstrate—by your actions—the way a Change Agent should behave, because, if you don’t, it is highly probable that they won’t. We tend to look at what our leader says and does as indicators of what we should say and do.

How do managers demonstrate their affinity for change? Here are a few examples to consider.

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They look at their business from the customer's point of view. They make it a point to 'shop' their business. They let everyone know they are going to do this to see what it's like to be a customer of the organization. They call the call center and ask for information. They call different departments to see how the phone is answered. They visit offices and stores to see how customers are treated. This is the best way they can know what it is their customers experience. If they don't know that, how can they continually improve it, even reinvent it?

Being curious and shopping gives you the opportunity to recognize outstanding performance and reward it. Give specific on-the-spot verbal recognition such as, "I am pleased to see you have set up weekly coaching on our change initiative with your people. I'd like you to share how you do this with the rest of the managers." Write personal notes commenting on what the manager has done that is in keeping with your expectations. Give managers who demonstrate their support of the change rewards and recognition, they are powerful motivators.

Shopping also points out where improvements are needed. Be quick to point these out and clarify what it is you want to improve and follow up to see that it is done. Without follow up, managers often will not make the improvement a priority.

Curiosity prevents you from relying on customer surveys to tell you what your customers want. Someone once asked Henry Ford why he hadn't asked people what they wanted in transportation when he was designing his first automobile. He said because they would have said, "faster horses". So don't expect customers to tell you. They don't know what they don't know.

These managers encourage ideas from outside. They are always looking for best practices and they expect their people to

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try things out. That means they encourage continual ‘tinkering’ with the processes, procedures, protocols of the business. And, as a part of this experimenting and exploring, they coach their people on how to take prudent risks so that decisions can be made in the field with confidence.

Finally, they continually talk up the value of change. They support those who are trying to make the change work and they coach those who are not.

Make being an advocate for change a part of every manager’s job description including your own.

Application Questions

1. What changes are being made in your business now?
2. What changes are being planned?
3. Why are these changes important to your business?
4. Who (employees, departments, divisions) is or will be effected by current and future changes?
5. What specifically do you expect managers to do to lead and support changes?
6. How have the managers of the impacted areas been prepared to lead and support these changes?
7. How sure are you that they can do this?
8. What is your involvement in the changes now and in the future?
9. What actions do you need to take to improve the effectiveness of the changes you are currently making or planning to make in the future?

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