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FOR DEVELOPING TALENT



MANAGING AS A GROUND FLOOR LEADER

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MANAGEMENT

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MANAGING AS A GROUND FLOOR LEADER



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In 2014, Southwest Airlines allocated the largest total dollar amount ever to its profit-sharing plan and was named one of *Fortune's* World's Most Admired Companies. How did the company do it? With a focus on its people.

With its “Fun-LUVing” culture, Southwest believes that its people are its greatest asset and competitive advantage. With continued growth and a record-breaking financial performance in the airline industry, Southwest shows that putting people first can bring great results for shareholders and customers.

If you ever fly with Southwest, you'll notice how the company's culture translates to a top-notch customer experience. Employees are trained to do whatever it takes to ensure that a passenger has a hassle-free experience, such as the ability to change a flight on a moment's notice without charge. They give an extraordinary

amount of love to every passenger from check-in to arrival. This type of customer experience is achieved only when an organization invests time, energy, and “LUV” into its employees.

Southwest understands that employees are the lifeblood of an organization. Without them, sales calls would never be made, products wouldn't be manufactured, and innovation would not exist. But for employees to be empowered to do their best work, they need to be engaged and understand the culture of their organization.

How can managers help ensure that this happens? They should make it their mission to have a positive influence on the lives of their employees. In other words, managers should become ground floor leaders.

This issue of *TD at Work* explains how you can transform your management style to become a ground floor leader, and how to hire individuals

THE POWER OF PEOPLE-FOCUSED ACTIONS

Ground floor leaders understand that certain people-focused actions lead to higher levels of engagement, increased productivity, and a boost in job satisfaction. Gallup's findings in its employee engagement survey revealed that the following actions are consistent with those cultures in which employees are highly engaged:

- “In the last seven days, I've received recognition or praise for doing good work.”
- “My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.”
- “There is someone at work who encourages my development.”
- “In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.”
- “This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.”

Gallup also found that employee engagement is maximized when managers do three things well:

1. Align individual strengths to strategic goals.
2. Leverage their own ability to develop people as individuals.
3. Create a team culture of engagement.

Ground floor leaders understand that appreciating people, practicing generosity, and encouraging others is the foundation of any development program. They all have one thing in common: working to serve others, not themselves.

Try this: Set a goal to encourage at least one person each day for a week. Then try and do the same for the next two weeks. Build a habit of encouraging others on a daily basis to build a culture of respect, trust, and compassion.

Source: Gallup. 2013. *State of the American Workplace*. Gallup. www.gallup.com/services/178514/state-american-workplace.aspx.

and lead employees who can be ground floor leaders themselves. In addition, you will see how exhibiting nine core traits will improve your ability to develop people and achieve strategic business goals.

Specifically, this issue of *TD at Work* will explain how:

- managers can bring out the best in their employees by becoming ground floor leaders
- to use ground floor leadership principles to align talent with strategic goals
- to empower your team to be ground floor leaders and create an engaged culture.

Becoming a ground floor leader takes practice and perseverance, particularly if you are in a challenging cultural environment. Throughout this issue, you will find the following components helpful in your transformation journey:

- actions you can do today to influence culture change and develop people
- real stories on how exhibiting certain values can lead to business results

- templates and tips to help you implement ground floor leader values in your organization.

Ground floor leadership doesn't require a high level of education or experience to perfect. You just need to view the workplace through the eyes of people on the ground floor of an organization. Instead of focusing on what your employees can do for you and the company, focus on helping your employees through intentional actions, resulting in engaged workers who want to perform well and help those around them.

9 TRAITS OF A GROUND FLOOR LEADER

Ground floor leaders don't sit in their corner office all day, demanding that results and tasks be completed. They make an intentional effort to develop their people by exhibiting nine characteristics on a daily basis, empowering them to achieve high performance.

THE EFFECTS OF GENEROSITY

Mary was a young trainer in a major corporation who was ambitious, hardworking, and eager to learn and take on new challenges. When her manager, Sara, asked her to accept a new IT-related training project, Mary was nervous but embraced the challenge.

She developed a series of four courses for a new software development process. The first was developed and delivered as an overview course and was implemented in a timely manner. But Mary struggled with the second one, because it was meant to go into more detail about certain IT processes, an area she didn't know anything about. Mary didn't know how to develop the materials.

As much as she didn't want to admit that she was struggling, Mary saw no choice but to go to her manager and express her concerns. Sara sat across the table and was completely focused on listening, as any ground floor leader would be in this situation.

Once Mary was finished, Sara asked her, "What can I do for you that would help you be successful?" Mary said that she didn't know where to go next in developing the materials and that she needed more direction. Sara cleared her schedule for a morning later that week to partner with Mary to develop the materials. Sara coached Mary on the fundamentals of good material design, and after the meeting, Mary felt equipped to move forward with the project. Sara's generosity lifted Mary's spirits and enabled her to be successful in any future training project.

Try this: Review your meetings for the upcoming week. Are there any that you might be able to skip to make time to help an employee? If you can delegate someone else to go in your place or get the information through another medium, such as a follow-up email, your time may be better spent with your door open to those who need assistance.

Kindness

Committing random acts of kindness in the workplace decreases stress, yields higher attendance rates, and increases productivity. How can something so simple have such profound effects on the performance of an organization? Because when you commit a random act of kindness, you show someone how much you care. And as the famous saying by Theodore Roosevelt goes: “No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

Generosity

When was the last time you “gave” to your people, especially those on the front lines of the business? The easiest form of giving—giving time—comes at no direct expense to the giver. Yet people seem to hold their own time at the highest value, so much so that others feel as though no one is there to help. Giving your time on a regular basis provides numerous benefits when it comes to developing your employees. Ground floor leaders understand that if they spend time with people and share their knowledge, they influence others and empower their employees to do great things.

Integrity

Ground floor leaders know that to gain respect from others, they must follow through on what they say and stay true to who they are—no matter who is around them. People are more likely to listen to someone with a high degree of integrity and take advice from leaders who they think have their best interests at heart.

GROUND FLOOR LEADERS UNDERSTAND THAT IF THEY SPEND TIME WITH PEOPLE AND SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE, THEY INFLUENCE OTHERS AND EMPOWER THEIR EMPLOYEES TO DO GREAT THINGS.

Courage

Ground floor leaders are courageous people who aren't afraid to say the right thing, even if it means giving a little tough love. This is not about criticizing individuals in front of the entire team, but about offering constructive feedback that might, at first, come off as harsh and direct. When managers do it the right way, however, they gain a great deal of respect from their followers. Although people hate bad news, deep down they know they need to hear it. In addition, leaders who have courageous visions for their organizations breed excitement and confidence in their people, resulting in high performance.

Curiosity

Have you ever heard people say something like, “[Manager's name] doesn't care about me, and probably doesn't even know my name”? This perception can be deadly for the morale of an organization, and it can diminish an employee's confidence and motivation. Ground floor leaders take an interest in their people, both personally and professionally. They are good listeners and remember to ask about the little things in life that make a big difference in someone's day.

Humor

Life is too short to be serious all the time. A simple joke that results in a burst of laughter can instantly change an environment and relieve stress—especially at an organization's darkest hour. Far too frequently, employees feel as though the workplace is so serious that any mistake will result in harsh consequences. This leads to a high-stress atmosphere and even more mistakes. Laughing about the little things goes a long way toward keeping employees' confidence and self-esteem high.

Trust

Employees tend to leave managers whom they don't trust. Ground floor leaders act with a high degree of integrity and welcome confidential conversations when necessary. The unfortunate thing about trust is that it can take years to build,