

Leadership

Self-Awareness Among Leaders Positively Influences Employee Behavior, Speaker Says

Poor leaders negatively impact the workplace, so HR should put a premium on developing effective upper-level employees, Doug Lennick, CEO and co-founder of Minneapolis-based consulting firm think2perform, said in a July 14 webinar and a July 17 e-mail to Bloomberg BNA.

Bad company leaders do not accept responsibility for their mistakes or poor decisions, he said. “They often blame others when things don’t work, and they often take undeserved credit when things do,” Lennick said. “This results in disengaged or under-engaged employees, and such employees adversely impact the top line and the bottom line.”

HR’s role in developing stronger company managers starts with accepting the importance of leadership development, he said.

HR should make sure that cross-organizational mentoring systems are in place; align performance management and reward and recognition systems with effective leadership; and train leaders to help employees set and achieve professional, personal and self development goals, Lennick said.

Becoming a Better Leader. One of the most effective ways to become a leader of others is to become a better manager of one’s self, Lennick said in the Modern Survey-sponsored webinar.

“Managers manage things; leaders influence people,” he said. “Leadership is about influencing others; it’s not about position power.”

Lennick asserted that many leaders have poor self-awareness, that is, the ability to gauge how their behavior influences others. He said this can lead to poor decision-making and make it difficult to build trust among employees.

He offered nine principles of extraordinary leader performance:

- Practice self-management: Leaders should become more aware of how their thoughts, emotions and actions are reflected in their leadership style.

- Build trust: Fully engaged employees trust management and senior leadership. There is a strong correlation between trust and engagement.

- Give feedback: Reinforce repetition of things that work. “When you see employees doing the right things, acknowledge them.”

- Set expectations: Set the expectation in the interview that employees are expected to bring their best every day. “Clarity around what is expected is how great leaders cut through ambiguity and close the gap between what is expected and what really happens.”

- Ask employees what do you want for yourself (WDYWFY): The foundation for growth is retention. WDYWFY says that all employees know what they want for themselves, and their leader should position himself or herself to help them achieve it.

- Make the ideal real: Align personal goals with organizational goals and values.

- Use real-time decision making: Don’t fall prey to “analysis paralysis”; synthesize the information at hand. Sound, personal instincts can often shield leaders from the bias of others.

- Create an environment of accountability: Accountability means, I am going to hold you accountable, responsibility means, I hold myself accountable. “If you want accountability, you have to hold yourself personally responsible that employee goals can be met.”

- Communicate values: Employees are more likely to be fully engaged when their organization’s values are known and understood.

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