



# MANAGING PEOPLE: A LOST CRAFT

By Sandra Boyd, National Practice Leader, Career Transition & Outplacement

If we're taking an honest look at the workplace of 2018 we need to acknowledge both the good and the bad. Yes, we're seeing more agility and greater diversity, but we're also hearing more reports of organizations struggling to attract, engage, and retain talent and it's impacting performance. So, what exactly is causing this? Well, in part it's because we've stopped teaching our managers how to manage!

## THE ART OF PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

I've worked in the talent management industry for over two decades, and I've seen first-hand that the adage "people don't leave jobs, they leave bosses" is true. Bad managers lead to high turnover, and high turnover impacts profits. So, why aren't we doing more to ensure our leaders master the craft of managing people?

### Think about it...

According to SHRM, every time a business replaces a salaried employee, it costs an average of 6 to 9 months' salary. For a manager making \$80,000 a year, that's \$40,000 to \$60,000 in recruiting and training expenses. If your organization could significantly reduce the cost of high turnover by teaching managers the art of managing people, doesn't that seem like a smarter use of corporate dollars?

People are the essence of an organization and should be considered the number one asset. In a corporate world filled with constant change, the critical mass of employees can keep the ship steady regardless of which way the wind is blowing. Since people are imperative to an organization's success, not teaching managers how to manage is simply a poor strategy.

Managers often get promoted for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with management capability (e.g., technical skills, being in the right place at the right time, management likes the individual, etc.) In fact, many people are promoted into management without any training, mentoring, or even simple feedback. So, is it really a surprise that so many managers don't have the foundational management skills?

Sadly, the act of management seems to have become a sideline for many managers. They're so busy managing projects and their own workload, that they're not given the opportunity to master their craft.



## Try this Exercise...

Write down the names of your top ten leaders. Now for each one of those leaders, ask yourself "Do the members of their team want to work with them, or are they actively trying to get away from this person?"

Name of Leader	Does the team want to work with this person
1 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
9 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
10 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

# HOW DO THE RESULTS LOOK?

## The Answer

In a time of hyper political correctness, it may sound counter-intuitive, but to fix low employee morale and high turnover, we need to re-create work environments that encourage employee intimacy, relationship building, communication, and that old-fashioned skill of “listening”!

Managers need to learn how to ask simple questions such as, “Did you enjoy that project? Would you like to expand on that skill set? Tell me about your career aspirations and desires? What is missing in your current job? What do you need more of or less of from me?” Imagine if an employee was not happy in his/her current job and felt confident enough to trust their manager to tell them. Instead of a negative, the situation becomes an opportunity: the manager gets to build trust with their employee by looking internally for a role they can thrive in, and the organization gets to build their employer brand and mitigate unnecessary spending on recruitment and onboarding.

FROM		TO
Performance Management	<b>TONE</b>	Career Management
One Size Fits All		Once Size Fits One
Evaluation		Coaching
Alienated		Engaged
Past		Future
Once Per Year	<b>TIMING</b>	Ongoing
Manager as Evaluator	<b>TOOLS</b>	Manager as Coach
Employee as Career Receiver		Employee as Career Owner

You can't manage any relationship with an annual rearview mirror approach, so you certainly should not be using this style to manage employee performance.

**In short, organizations need to:**

- ▶ teach their managers how to manage people,
- ▶ give managers permission to do hands-on management, and
- ▶ hold managers accountable for engagement and retention.

This approach is the first building block of successful leadership. Here's how to get started:

## HAVE A CONVERSATION

Your culture is your strongest competitive advantage. To create a culture that fosters communication, senior leaders should insist, not just encourage, managers to have regular on-going conversations with employees. That means managers need to get out of their offices or pick up the phone to connect with employees, instead of relying on email. I can already hear the excuses about a lack of time and competing priorities, but when you pause to consider what's at stake, it doesn't take an MBA to realize these aren't valid barriers.

It is a proven fact that a lack of engagement equals financial loss, so start to shape your culture one conversation at a time. Lay the foundation through a partnership approach between your employees, managers, and the organization. Promote regular career conversations that provide opportunities and support, including resources to empower and enable career accountability, and weave this into your existing performance management system.

Next, you need to tackle how to convince your managers, who already complain about spending too much time "managing people problems" and not enough time getting the job done, that they should have more coaching conversations. To do so, give them permission and time, and make this responsibility part of their annual performance plan.



"managers need to get out of their offices or pick up the phone to connect with employees, instead of relying on email"

### Here's what to tell them:

- ▶ Managing the team and improving performance is a big part of their job, perhaps the most important.
- ▶ Regular feedback conversations will transform the dreaded annual review and make it easier for them and their direct reports. It becomes a chance to take stock and celebrate successes.
- ▶ Helping others grow professionally is rewarding for every good manager.
- ▶ Effective management attracts high-potentials to the team and overall performance will improve through osmosis – leading to greater career and financial gains for the manager.

For employees, give them permission to manage their careers and demonstrate what that looks like.

### Share with them that:

- ▶ They should become advocates and drivers of their own careers, assuming full accountability, while trusting that they will be supported by their manager and the organization.
- ▶ A personal assessment of their current skills and knowledge is necessary to define their career aspirations and personal brand.
- ▶ With the confidence and language to effectively talk about their career aspirations, they need to communicate with managers and take action toward their goals, using the tools and resources made available by the organization.

Regardless of age and stage, most employees want the same thing from their manager – open communication, honest feedback, and trust. When you create an environment that holds managers accountable for meeting these needs, high-performance will follow.

### About Sandra Boyd

Sandra is the National Practice Leader of Career Transition and Outplacement at Optimum Talent. She has 20 years of experience supporting leading organizations in transforming their businesses through people and is often called upon as an industry thought leader. Sandra is the author of *The Hidden Job Market* and co-author of *Flexible Thinkers Guide to Extreme Career Performance*.

Telephone: 647.788.3230 | Email: [sboyd@optimumtalent.com](mailto:sboyd@optimumtalent.com)

