



The 3 Essential Management Activities That Make the BIGGEST Impact on Employee Productivity

By Susan Cullen

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It's important that leaders know the skills they need to enhance the satisfaction and performance of every member of their team. To increase employee productivity and performance, we have found that these 3 basic skills can go a long way towards motivating and developing staff. The skills needed are:

1. To Understand Individual Differences and Motivations
2. To Hire the Right Person to Start With, and
3. To Coach and Develop Team Members on a Regular, Consistent Basis

Managers have to deal every day with a variety of issues. It's not easy to manage a group of people when they are all different. You have to learn how to relate to each of them differently in order to have a more productive team.

Step One: Understand Individual Differences and Motivations



We each think, act and are motivated in unique ways. One approach that worked excellently with one person may yield a different response from someone else.

Every manager has experienced the frustration of not understanding why one management approach that works beautifully with one employee is ineffective with another. That's because what we think would be motivating to us isn't always motivating to someone else.

The same principle applies to client and co-worker relationships. We "click" or connect with some individuals and understand each other. But we also work with individuals who approach things differently. Research shows there are four different behavioral style dimensions. Understanding their characteristics can help us become more effective in our interactions with each other.

The DiSC model for understanding behavioral styles provides a framework for understanding human behavior. It recognizes four different behavioral style dimensions: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. Although we each can utilize all four dimensions, we tend to use one or two most often.

Specific resources to learn more about your own style and how to work effectively with each team member is provided at the end of this document.

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Step Two: Hire the Right Person to Start With

Utilizing “Behavioral Interviewing” techniques will help you hire the right person for a position from the start.

A successful interview starts with these key principles:

- Future behavior is best predicted by past behavior.
- Effective interviewing begins with a thorough understanding of the open position.
- Focus on the right fit for the organization, as well as the capabilities for the job.
- Multiple interviews and interviewers produce more accurate results.
- Candidates must be treated with dignity and respect.



The following is a sample interview question that should elicit information on specific behavioral dimensions.

Tell me about a time where you were faced with a number of priorities and significant pressure to accomplish a number of tasks in a relatively short time frame.

Probes:

- What kinds of things did you consider when prioritizing tasks in order to meet the required deadlines?
- How did you respond to the pressure to perform effectively in this situation?
- What was the result of your effort?
- What did you learn from this experience?

You need to ask yourself “What am I looking for in a candidate?” If you understand the required responsibilities for the job, you can begin to identify the technical skills as well as the performance skills needed to perform the job effectively.

Follow these steps to prepare for the interview:

- Know the Position
- Review Candidate Materials
- Prepare an Agenda for Interviewing
- Plan the Logistics

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An effective process for conducting the interview would be as follows:

1. Set the tone
2. Review the candidate's resume
3. Provide position information
4. Ask behavioral interviewing questions
5. Provide a realistic job preview
6. Discuss next steps and close

After the interview you need to schedule at least 15 minutes of evaluation time to review the candidate's responses. Be sure to evaluate candidate information when it's fresh in your mind. Time will alter your memory and perception of the candidate. For each question, consider whether the candidate's answer is more like that of a qualified candidate, or more like that of someone who is unqualified.

Step Three: Coach and Develop Team Members Consistently



One of the most difficult things a manager has to do is talk to an employee when there is a performance problem. Once you understand the different styles of your employees, you will be better prepared to discuss the performance issue without de-motivating them or making them think you don't understand what's going on. You want to make sure that they are accountable for their actions by having them come up with the solutions. A wise person once told me the easiest way to get someone to take ownership of a situation is to ask them "What can you do to avoid this from happening again?" You want to turn it around so that they

answer the question. You can give your input if they request it, but let them come up with and "own" the solution.

Here are some action steps to follow when you are having a performance coaching discussion:

1. Communicate the situation. Focus on the specific performance issue, *not* the employee.
2. Identify the impact of consequence of the performance issue.
3. Ask the employee what caused the problem.

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4. Ask the employee to make suggestions for improvement.
5. Contribute your own suggestions.
6. Develop an agreed upon Action Plan and set a follow-up date.
7. Express your confidence in the employee and the Action Plan for improving performance.

Summary

When managers understand how to hire the right person to begin with, coach and develop them regularly, and adapt their approach to the needs of each individual, they have mastered the activities that have the most profound effect on the success of each individual and their team.

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About the Author



Susan Cullen is the President of Quantum Learning Solutions, Inc. and has extensive experience working with organizations of all sizes to enhance management and leadership development. She is the author of numerous articles and e-learning programs focusing on the most effective tools for retention, engagement and performance.

Quantum has been providing high quality training and development solutions since 1988. We work with a variety of Fortune 500 organizations and smaller companies, in the areas of Management Development, Employee Development, and Team Building.

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