

Monthly Update | December 2017

Welcome to our monthly business newsletter designed to help you concentrate on working more “ON” your business, rather than “IN” it. Please remember our skills and experience can provide you with help and support, give you a strong shoulder to lean on and someone on your side, to bounce ideas off.

Best wishes

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Managing High Performance Teams

Steve Jobs was quoted as saying “It doesn’t make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do.” Once you have hired a bunch of really smart people, you need to manage them effectively

High performing people tend to take pride in their work, they want to grow and develop throughout their careers. In order to manage them effectively, you need to redistribute decision-making. A top-down, hierarchical approach to management may be ineffective because the best employees tend to know more about their area of expertise than their managers do. As such, you need to give people some autonomy so that they can effectively self-manage.

The best performing businesses tend to have flatter organisation structures. Information is shared more openly across the business and people are able to make decisions more quickly as a result.

In a high performance organisation, managers need to provide support and demonstrate leadership through teamwork. The best managers tend to be able to bring people with them.

They do this by building strong relationships with their teams and through effective communication. In creating a culture of teamwork, managers can align the individual objectives of each team member with the overall goals of the business. Where there is misalignment, good managers will work with the individual to agree a compromise.

If you want to be a really effective manager and create a high performance team, you need to be a good listener. Ask your team members for their view on how to best get a piece of work done. This shows the team that their opinions and expertise are valued. The best leaders listen to the ideas and insights from their people and allow them the space to implement those ideas.

Everyone wants to perform meaningful work and enjoy being involved with interesting projects. If opportunities are given by a manager who takes the time to create strong relationships with people, the team can be more effective and innovative than ever.

Shift Your Networking Focus

Networking isn’t just about attending an event with a stack of business cards and speaking with random people. People want to do business with people they like and trust, and people they know through friends and shared connections.

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Attending networking events has its place. If you work in a particular industry sector and you know that your contacts are going to be at a conference or event, you might want to attend. Events provide opportunities to catch up with customers and key contacts and are likely to be time well spent. However attending such an event "cold" where you know nobody in the room, is unlikely to produce a new pipeline of business.

If you want to build a really powerful network for yourself, look for situations that will allow you to make friends, not just "contacts". Small settings work well. Friends of friends and e-mail introductions go a long way. Keep the focus on making meaningful connections, instead of giving business cards to random people.

Finding people with common interests such as sailing or golf can help you to build strong relationships and they will be more likely to engage with you when they need to buy the product or service you offer.

So, focus on the relationships first and wait for the business opportunities to arise over time. This can be a slow process, but you'll end up with a strong circle of people you trust.

Managing Office Politics

Office politics are a fact of life. People are complex and work relationships are often complicated to navigate. So, what should you do when office politics become problematic?

Listen first:

When people feel that they have been listened to, they tend to step away from the politics and become more transparent. Active listening, combined with empathy, is powerful.

Lead by example:

If left unchecked, office politics can lead to bullying and conflict. If office politics becomes a serious issue, the management team needs to set a clear code of conduct, lead by example, and quickly discourage unprofessional behaviour through direct communication.

Stick to your values:

Stick to your principles and don't let others force you down a road that you aren't comfortable with. You should try to remain consistent, authentic and ethical. This can be difficult if everyone else is being pulled into a political situation.

Provide feedback:

Encourage your team members to focus on the long-term goals and objectives of the team and the business. Providing continuous performance feedback is a good way to address any undesirable behaviour. You should try to provide constructive and specific feedback to each of your team members and keep them focused on their individual responsibilities and objectives within the business.

Keep people informed:

Lack of information can contribute to negative office politics. As such, it is important to embrace open communication. Managers should brief their teams and keep them up to date on the company strategy, overall progress towards achieving objectives, upcoming projects or changes, etc.