

The Pitfalls of Promotion

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Promoting a staff member up the ranks to management presents a certain amount of risk for business owners. Choose the wrong person, and you could alienate the staff, damage your reputation, and likely miss important project deadlines due to the new manager's ineptitude. Conversely though, how many times have you heard this story *"Mary was a fantastic welder/shop assistant/administrator (insert any other appropriate team member title here) but when we promoted her to a team leader's role she failed miserably. Clearly she just hasn't got what it takes to be a manager"*.

Team members are generally promoted to team leaders as they are very effective in their current role. However, taking that step up requires a new skill set and as business owners and leaders we often under-estimate how big that shift is. The good news is that the new skill set can be learned but when we promote we frequently use the "sink or swim" method of people development! You know the one....here's your new job, your new team and when can you sort out those problem staff?

So what are the new skills a freshly promoted team leader needs to learn? Bill Bonnstetter, the founder and chairman of the board of Target Training International (TTI) and TTI Performance Systems Limited eloquently says "in order to understand our relationships with other people, we must first understand ourselves". In other words, to manage other people, you need to know what makes you tick first! If we spend time getting the foundation right for people management, the remaining skill sets like communication, delegation, time management, on-the-job learning, giving and receiving feedback become so much easier. The leap to people management is massive – skills that have not likely been used before need to be learned and applied very quickly.

Once the skill set has been developed there are three other traps that business owners or managers fall into. Watch out for these:

1. The new team leader needs to be able to understand and articulate the big picture to the team – why are we here and what is our purpose. It's your role as their manager to provide them with that information.
2. The team leader needs to be clear what roles and responsibilities they have but they need to be given the freedom to choose how to best manage the new role. Give them responsibility but don't over-manage and tell them how to do the job as well!
3. Lastly, don't be tempted to over-manage by dropping down and communicating with the team without involving the new team leader. It's very easy for the new team leader to feel very disempowered when this happens.

Next time you reflect on a poor performing team leader perhaps ask yourself was there a better you could have managed their promotion?