The 10 Golden Rules of Effective Management

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Even if your job title doesn't include "manager," there's a good chance you'll have to handle some management duty sometime in your career. And, as an entrepreneur, you're *already* a manager, because almost every one of your responsibilities has some management element to it.

In short, your employees are the ones making your vision a reality, and your job is to make sure they do it efficiently.

But being an effective manager is about more than just driving your employees to work harder -- or more efficiently. Forcing employees to work a certain way can breed resentment, even disloyalty, while being too soft can lead to bad habits, laziness or boredom. There's no "right" management style, as each employee and company is going to have an individual perspective.

But there are some universally "wrong" ways to manage. Avoid them by following these 10 "golden" rules of effective management:

1. Be consistent.

This is the first rule because it applies to most of the others. Before your management approach can be effective, it must be consistent. You must reward the same behaviors every time they appear, discourage the same behaviors when they appear and treat every member of your team with an equal, level-headed view.

2. Focus on clarity, accuracy and thoroughness in communication.

How you communicate to your team can dictate your eventual success. When relaying instructions, recapping meetings or just doling out company updates, strive for the clarity, accuracy and thoroughness of your communication. This goes for any other medium, whether that means in-person communication, email or a phone call. Clarity, accuracy and thoroughness are the best way to avoid miscommunication and keep your team on the same page.

3. Set the goal of working as a team.

If you want your team members to work together, have them work for something together. Setting goals just for the department or one individual breeds a limited mentality and forces team members to remain isolated. Instead, give staffers a unified focus and purpose, to inspire them together.

4. Publicly reward and recognize hard work.

When a member of your team does something exceptional, reward him/her -- with a bonus, a small trophy or even just a vocal recognition. Do this in front of the group; it will make the intended recipient feel good and show the rest of the team that hard work is rewarded. The only caveat goes back to rule one: Be consistent in your rewards so you won't be seen as playing favorites.

5. Be the example.

As the manager and leader, you should set an example in terms of your behavior. If you show up late, your team will be less punctual. If you lose your temper easily, others will be amiss in keeping their emotions in check. Strive to be your own ideal of the perfect worker, especially in front of the team.

6. Never go with 'one-size-fits-all.'

Your team is comprised of individuals with unique preferences, strengths, weaknesses and ideas. Never use the exact same approach to motivate, encourage or mold all of them. Focus on individuals, and customize your approach to fit each one.

7. Remain as transparent as possible.

Transparency shows your integrity as a leader, and builds trust with the individual members of your team. If you lie about something, or withhold information, you could jeopardize your relationships and the respect you command as a leader.

8. Encourage all opinions and ideas.

The more people you have actively participating in discussions and attempting to make improvements to the organization, the better. Never chastise a team member for voicing an opinion respectfully -- even if it goes against your original vision or isn't well thought out. Cutting someone down for voicing an opinion builds resentment, and discourages people from sharing their own new thoughts.

9. Help people enjoy work.

You don't need a pool table or dress code abolition to make work fun. You can make the workday more enjoyable with such new elements as surprise lunch outings, a dedicated break room or even just casual conversations with your workers. Help your people enjoy coming to work, and they'll do their best work for you.

10. Listen and ask questions.

If someone doesn't agree with your management style or doesn't like the direction of the company, don't silence that person. Listen. And ask questions of your entire team: *What do you think of this? How do you feel about that?* This open dialogue makes it easier to proactively identify problems and work together to create a mutually beneficial environment. It will also make your employees feel appreciated and acknowledged.

As you'll notice, these rules leave plenty of wiggle room to apply your own personal "brand" of leadership and management. They stand as fundamental truths, considerations and principles that govern an effective management role rather than a strict instruction manual to success. Stay true to these principles in addition to your own, and you'll unify your team in a rewarding and enriching environment.