Leadership Margin

A lot has been written about time management for supervisors, but let's draw a distinction between how you handle your management tasks and how you build your available leadership margin.

 Managers and supervisors must isolate a significant margin of their capacity for the unexpected, including oversight, employee development, and planning for the future. You must maintain this margin of time for pure leadership by focusing on the following strategies.

Delegate to documentation

First, confirm that your processes and procedures are effectively documented. Assign any additional development and maintenance of documentation to someone with technical writing skills. With this in hand, along with effective delegation, the established processes will guide the day-to-day operations with expectations and measurables that will maintain appropriate standards of performance.

Boundaries

Do not let yourself be drawn into tasks that you were previously responsible for, or tasks that well-intentioned employees habitually expect you to resolve. Ask your employee for the alternatives they have considered, what solution they recommend, discuss the next steps and confirm they own the responsibility going forward.

Conflict intervention

Resolving conflicts is an important skill for supervisors to develop. As your experience with conflicts and interventions mature, the more you will quickly engage, confront, de-escalate and provide hope. Confrontations may grow from an ember to a raging fire, and will emotionally drain you until you have achieved a resolution. Develop your comfort level to resolve conflicts through training, anticipation, and experience.

Decisiveness

Understand and face your hesitation. Is your need for consensus, broad support, and sharing responsibility an attempt to avoid owning the outcome? Identify mentors and seek their input, and accept the fact that a good decision confidently executed will outperform a great decision without conviction. Make the necessary adjustments quickly as the results of your decisions unfold.

Do your research and seek experienced input, but build your leadership margin through delegation, setting boundaries, conflict resolution, and decisiveness.

It is critical that you invest your leadership margin to develop an agile culture that is able to handle the economic challenges, competitive pressures and technical advancements that will require corporate change. Encourage employees to challenge the status quo, consider alternatives, and anticipate and prepare them for inevitable change. It is a leader's responsibility to manage the hope or discontent of their culture.

Whether an individual is preparing for a leadership role, of has been in a position of leadership for a time, a leadership assessment is a powerful tool to determine their natural leadership orientation.