

What Managers Most Want to Know about Leadership



by **Jerry Strom**

Observations on Leadership as found by 'The High Points Survey'

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Managers today have a lot of questions about leadership. They realize weaknesses in their abilities impact their performance, and limit the results their teams can accomplish. But, what do they most commonly struggle with, and where could managers use some help?

Now, 'The High Points Survey' gives us important answers and insights on where to focus to become more skilled and capable.

The basis for this research was developed through the 'Six Core Competencies of Leadership' training program, where we asked the question, "What are the five things you would most like to know about leadership?"

By studying the opinions of nearly 1,000 managers and three years of data, a number of significant patterns and themes emerged.

Here's what we found out:

▶ **Motivation Comes First**

Appearing on almost one-third of the questionnaires, the most commonly asked question about leadership was, "How do I motivate and inspire?"

Managers intuitively know performance lags when there's a lack of energy on the job.

Since the amount of energy at work is influenced by the leader in charge, what do they personally do about it? And how can they become more

comfortable and prepared to solve this fundamental workplace problem?

Motivational issues can be found on any rung of the organization chart – from upper management, to peers, and subordinates. Managers need the skills to identify the basis of the discontent, and be able to turn those root causes in a positive, winning direction.

Managers must also manage their own enthusiasm, recognizing when it's low or depleted, and finding ways to reinvigorate themselves.

The nature and culture of their workplaces can obstruct managers from developing a new, more engaging environment. Organizations are more than a complicated web of activities; they represent the individual and collective feelings of those engaged in its tasks.

Since motivation levels measure feelings, leaders who fail to effectively get their employees to feel good about themselves and their work will ultimately underperform.

▶ **Then Relationships**

Fostering and strengthening relationships throughout the organization emerged as the second-most sought after leadership quality. Relationship-building is viewed as important, but complicated.

The survey makes it clear managers are having trouble balancing tasks and relationships, as summed up in this question, "How do I balance my leadership role and my relationship role, while maintaining my authority?"

Keeping a proper distance is problematic. Respondents wanted to know how to manage friendships in the context of other workers – not seen as too close, or too far – while remaining objective and fair, to all.

Managers express difficulty in allocating their time between people and projects, and being able to make tough decisions they know will impact their employees – potentially harming their interactions with one another.

Support for relationship-building isn't evident in all organizational cultures, and presents an obstacle for managers who seek to connect with their workers in a workplace that doesn't value the approach.

▶ **Linking Leadership to Performance**

Today's overwhelming-emphasis on technical skills and proficiency – which is needed and important for individual contributors, and becomes the primary basis on which we evaluate performance and potential – does little for the development of our managers' relational skills and motivational instincts.

The result is that many managers come technically prepared, but at a loss to demonstrate leadership qualities where relationships are essential to managing people, directing the work, and creating the commitment needed to accomplish tasks.

There's a direct linkage between managers grasping the high points of leadership, and the capacity they have to achieve business goals.

▶ **The Top-10 Results of the Survey**

• **The top-10 findings of 'The High Points Survey'** will be discussed one key topic a month in our articles posted at www.encouragement.com. Register on the site to receive them automatically, as they are published.

You can also contact us for a summary of the survey.



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