

21^{of} Secrets **Successful Staff** **Management**



£7.95

By **Steve Pepper** FRSPH, MIOH, MCIPD

Forward by Jonathan Jay

If you are a business owner who employs staff, then this book of Steve's will provide invaluable advice for you and your team.

One of the secrets of business success is having a highly motivated and enthusiastic team around you to help you and your business achieve your full potential.

Inside these pages you will find a wealth of information that will help you to avoid costly mistakes.

Steve has used his own expertise and experience to bring you this really useful book. It is based on best practice as well as having a down to earth, common sense, approach to managing staff.

I hope you will enjoy the read and be able to put some of these 21 "Secrets" into practice.

Best wishes,



Jonathan Jay

Chairman of NABO

The Nationwide Alliance of Business Owners

Preface:

This publication has been a long time in the making.

My own experiences as a manager, responsible for groups and teams of staff, have been wide and varied.

When I got my first management role in 1979, proudly wearing my manager's badge and confident that when the telephone rang it must be for me, I didn't realise I was in for a very miserable time.

I didn't know how to handle staff and they knew it! Since then I have had many mentors and I would like to thank them all for helping me over the years.

At the next job I took on, they were wise enough to send me on a NEBSS course. This taught me the fundamentals of good supervision and management.

Later on, I found myself delivering the "NHS Supervisory Development Course". I thoroughly enjoyed this and it made me feel like I was giving something back.

More recently I undertook and graduated from a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Course at Huddersfield University and realised how little I actually knew back then

You will find in these pages some of the hints and tools that I would like to pass on to others who have been thrust into the challenges of managing staff. I hope that you'll find them useful.

Some of these are the basic principles of staff management, some from the finest that Harvard business school could muster. The rest is simply a collection of my personal reflections on what makes people tick and good old-fashioned common sense.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading this publication and be able to use the tools I mention here to effectively manage your staff team.

Steve Pepper

UNITY OF COMMAND:

"Workers should receive orders from only one manager."

HENRI FAYOL 1841-1925 Father of Modern Management

For my lovely wife Jackie

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Contents

Chapter:	Page:
1/Learning to say no	5
2/Giving Orders	6
3/Successful Delegation	7
4/Successful Communication	8
5/Barriers to Communication	9
6/Managing Meetings	10
7/A word about emails and social media	11
8/How to gain “Rapport” with staff	12
9/Motivation	13
10/De-Motivation	14
11/Management of change	15
12/Legal and Effective Recruitment & Selection Advertising and Shortlisting	16
13/Legal and Effective Recruitment & Selection Interviewing	17
14/One to One Supervision	18
15/Appraisals	19
16/Types of Individuals	20
17/How Groups differ from individuals	21/23
18/Managing Stress Levels	24
19/Health and Safety	25
20/Staff Personal Safety	26
21/How to avoid being taken to an Industrial Tribunal or compromise agreement.	27
Notes	28
Acknowledgements	29

1/Learning to say no

Or managing challenging staff, who think they're indispensable.

They say the hardest thing you have to learn, as a manager is to say, **"NO"** (and mean it).

On the first day you take charge of staff, it is vital that you make it clear what you expect from them and what's not acceptable. One contradiction is that staff will often say they don't like being told what to do, but in reality they mostly expect to be told. It's not a case of **"if"** staff will challenge you as a new manager but **"when"**.

By setting appropriate boundaries and working out what you're prepared to accept in terms of staff attitude and behaviour, you're making it easier for yourself. If you're not prepared, it will come as a shock if members of staff challenge you. If you make a wrong decision when you're being challenged, you will set a precedent that will be difficult to change in the future.

If you need time to think something through then say so. Tell them that you will get back to them with your answer within a reasonable time and follow this through. If the situation is difficult and people are pushing you for an answer make an excuse. Say you have a meeting or have an important job to finish.

1960s Prime Minister Harold Wilson famously used a similar ploy when being asked questions on television. When faced with such an event he used to take his pipe out. He would fill and light it before responding. This gave him a few valuable moments to carefully craft his reply.

Often people push the boundaries because they think they are indispensable in terms of either knowledge or skill. If you initially give in to staff, be aware that they will stretch the boundaries further until something gives.

I had a colleague in the food industry whose food handler refused to remove her nail polish. This was going against good hygiene standards. And my colleague knew that this would be a problem when the local council came for inspection. But she was a good cook and was well liked by everyone in the company. So he had a dilemma.

A simple way of dealing with the situation would have been to meet her at the start of work with a bottle of nail varnish remover. Give an option to remove her nail varnish and go to work, or keep her nail varnish and go home. Also, tell her to expect a discussion that could lead to potential disciplinary action if she refused to follow working guidelines. I doubt she would have carried on wearing nail varnish if she had been given this option. Once the standard had been set, it would be easy to monitor and maintain.

Remember that if your business is highly dependent on one certain member of staff, you are not managing your succession planning (i.e. what would happen if that person was to go on long term sick leave?)

"All one has to do is to learn to say "no" if an activity contributes nothing."

Peter Drucker

2/Giving Orders

Some people find it incredibly difficult to give simple orders to their staff. Often they dress up an order and make it sound like a request. For example, they say: “would you mind if...” when what they really mean is “do this.”

While it’s always helpful to be polite, what would you do if they say “no”? By doing this, you’re putting yourself in a potential conflict situation. Worse still, you could end up in a win-lose situation.

Others make the mistake of making the order personal e.g. “I want you to do this now.”

If you use this style you can come across as arrogant and the member of staff may feel offended or “inferior”. Additionally, the staff may take such an order literally and not use their discretion. If your members of staff follow orders blindly and get it wrong they’ll likely turn to you and say, “I did exactly what you told me to”.

The best way to give orders is to be less “person centred” and more “needs based.” Look at the two examples below and see which of them is more comfortable to receive.

1. “Go get the mop and clean up that spillage.”
2. “Go get the mop and clean up the spillage, before someone slips on it.”

Using “please” and “thank you” is polite but make sure that your order doesn’t sound like your staff has an option whether to do it or not. Also check that the person you are giving the order to is capable of doing the task.

The more you explain why something needs doing, the easier it is for your staff to understand your order and carry it out properly.

Rudyard’s “six serving men” who, what, why, when, where and how would be a good start.

Once people can see the logic behind something, the more they will be prepared to accept and do what is required.

If possible, allow them to use their discretion and give them control over the task (also see the chapter on delegation.) This will give them a sense of ownership and is a good way to build up trust.

If you take these simple guidelines on board, giving orders becomes easier.

It is also important to note that knowing your staff well is vital to giving good orders. Spread less pleasant tasks around and be careful not to single out anyone. This way, you are seen as playing fair.

“Never give an order that can’t be obeyed.”

General Douglas MacArthur

3/Successful Delegation

Delegation is a great way to increase your own personal efficiency as well as developing your staff. However not many managers have successfully developed the art of delegating.

Delegate the task not the responsibility. Remember that when you are delegating a task, you're not off-loading your responsibility. If the person you chose failed to do the job properly, you are mostly responsible. Part of the art of delegating is the ability to choose the right person to do the job. So before you delegate, make sure that the person you have in mind has the skills and the positive attitude to complete the task. And most importantly, he or she is keen to do it. Once you have chosen the right person, check that he or she understands what you want to happen.

Things to consider:

Before delegating a task consider the following:

1. Are you simply dumping a job that you hate doing? This is not delegating but simply avoiding doing things you don't like.
2. Do you have time to delegate this task? The delegation process can initially take longer than it would take you to do the job. This is why some people never delegate. You have to consider supervision, checking progress and time for any re-work needed.
3. Is this a task that you should delegate? It may not be right to delegate a task that is highly confidential or has a big impact on the future of the organisation. For example, what happens if you delegate the recruitment and selection of staff and they chose the wrong person?

Delegation Process. When I was a Head Chef at the Bridlington Hospitals, I used to get catering students in the main kitchen from the local college on placement. It was a busy kitchen and I needed to check how good the placements were at following instructions, before I let them loose in the kitchen. As part of my testing process, I would tell them to start making a sponge and cream the margarine and sugar together, then crack the eggs but not add them to the mix. After that, they should stop and wait for more instructions. Many of them did as they were told. I knew then that these students were ready to learn more. However, there would be some who would go on and put all the eggs in the mix. As a result, their mixture curdled. This simple test gave me an idea which students I could trust to do more and which ones needed closer supervision.

You can use a similar test to find the right person in your team who you can trust to follow your brief. Only use a simple task for the person to do. This way you are not compromising large projects and not overwhelming your staff. Clearly inform them how much discretion they are allowed and which part they need to follow closely. The more control you give your staff over a project the more creative they can be. But make sure that you know them well enough. Choosing wisely who to delegate to can free up your valuable time, help with your succession planning and develop a world-class team. But if you do it wrong, you run the risk of demotivating your staff.

Delegation "The art of getting someone else to do something you want done because they want to do it."

Dwight D. Eisenhower

4/Successful Communication

Effective communication is the responsibility of the communicator.

Communication can be broadly broken into the following areas and I will try to deal with them in that order: Listening, Oral and Written.

Effective Listening. Listening is both an art and a skill that needs to be learnt. You have to be able to interpret what the person really means rather than just the words he or she says. It can mean that you need to guess and follow it up by summarising and reflecting e.g. "So what you mean is". By doing this, you check your understanding of what is being said.

A nod or verbal affirmation also helps the flow of the conversation. If you are the listener, silence is an effective tool in some circumstances. For example if you are interviewing and the interviewee stops, you can get more information by simply staying silent. Silence can inevitably get the other person to say more and fill the gap. Although it sounds easy, it takes a lot of practice to do this effectively.

Rapport building is very helpful for successful communication. If you have built a rapport with others, they feel more relaxed talking with you and are more forthcoming with information. To build rapport, pay attention to the body language of the other person and keep eye contact (NB: this may not be applicable to different cultures). Try to mirror or match the person's body language. Do this subtly. I don't mean parrot fashion, as this can have a negative effect. Unless you want to shut the other person up, don't interrupt in mid-sentence. This can dramatically break your rapport. There is not enough space here to go into it in detail but there is a lot of information in the web about rapport and body language. Also check out books and articles on Neuro-Linguistic Programming. NLP can help you learn to build rapport and effective communication.

Oral. It is easy to think of oral communication as simply talking but it is more than that. It is conversing with your business partner. It is talking with a friend or a child. It is having a telephone conversation, giving a staff briefing, chairing a meeting, delivering a training session, being interviewed on television, giving evidence in a court, addressing a large conference and a lot more. If you see oral communication as more than just talking, but also providing information, expressing feelings, delivering an important message or influencing people's opinion, you will have a different approach. You will find that most oral communication needs meticulous planning. Again body language and eye contact have an important place in oral communication, but you will also need to pay particular attention to the tone of voice and facial expression.

Written. Written communication can be in many forms. In some organisations, it is important to pay attention on who's been cc'd and bcc'd in e-mails and memos (are they still used?). Also, in this day and age, there is an expectation for an instant answer. Whatever you write, be it a staff notice, poster, minutes of meeting, instructions, disciplinary or grievance letter or a text message, you need to think about your target audience before you start putting your content together.

Choosing the best method of communication cannot be underestimated.

"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak"

Epictetus

5/Barriers to Communication

Physical and Environmental Barriers. It goes without saying that the environment you're in can affect the quality of the communication. If you're in a large open echoing place, it is probably not as easy to hear someone as it would be in a sound dampened one such as a hotel meeting room.

A room full of people all talking at the same time, or a busy pub or nightclub likewise isn't conducive. Busy background noises will hinder the process of effective communication. Do your best to minimise the effects of these environmental barriers and try and to choose a suitable place to have your conversation or presentation.

Also do you have visual contact with the other person? 90% of communication is non-verbal. Think about that the next time you're on the phone.

Human Barriers. This is one of the most difficult barriers to control. Quite often we have no idea of what is going on inside the other person's head. What is their perception and understanding of what is being said?

Have they got problems inside or outside of work that are preventing them understanding and acting on the outcome you would like? For example if someone has a close relative seriously ill in hospital they would find it hard to concentrate.

What is the other person's body language telling you? Can you tell if you have their full attention? Are they acting with indifference, or looking out of the window, or are they busy on their computer working hard to get a deadline finished? If that is the case, it is not the best time to talk to them. Unless you can get their full attention, you can't have an effective conversation with them.

Don't give someone a ticking off in front of their colleagues. You will embarrass them and raise their defences. Do it more effectively by taking them quietly to one side.

Another problem can be communicating with someone who is under the influence of drugs (prescribed or otherwise) or alcohol. If you have ever tried to getting through to someone under the influence of drugs or alcohol it is difficult. You will soon find that the conversation seems to go round in circles. Best wait until they are in a state when they can make rational judgements and clearly understand what is being said.

Distraction. Do you remember the film "The Full Monty?" The scene, when Robert Carlyle and the others were distracting Gerald (Tom Wilkinson) while he was being interviewed? It's difficult having to have a conversation when there are things that divert people's attention. Try and keep these distractions to a minimum.

"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't being said. "

Anon

Notes

Steve Pepper Has had many years experience as a supervisor and manager. He is a graduate and member of the HCIMA (Now Institute of Hospitality), a graduate and member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. He is also a fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health.

He has had over thirty years experience as a supervisor and manager of various Catering Organisations, Supported Housing and Training projects.

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Early in her career Kath gained extensive experience as a graphic designer and studio manager for agencies in Yorkshire and the Midlands before establishing herself as a freelance designer in 2001. Since then Kath has built a strong network of carefully selected industry professionals. Kath has a great capacity for innovative thinking, which extends beyond graphic design to product and service development. Some of her other strengths are that she is pragmatic, pays close attention to detail, insists on high quality, and is totally committed to meeting and exceeding Client expectations. She is passionate about corporate social responsibility and proactive in creating ways for organisations to “give back”.

FLAIR Creative, conveniently-based midway between Leeds and Harrogate, provides a full-range of cost-effective design, artwork and production services to a broad client-base drawn from commercial, public and independent sectors.

FLAIR Creative also designs and implements online marketing campaigns involving a mix of optimised and content-managed websites, e-shots, e-zines and media-support for business networking.
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Secrets

This is the first in a planned series of books. This will include Fire Safety, Food Safety and Health & Safety. For more details go to my website www.steve-pepper.co.uk

Every effort has been taken to ensure the topics covered in this book are accurate and up to date. We would however recommend that you seek advice from a suitably qualified professional to ensure that any changes you make regarding your workplace and your staff are legal and within accepted practices. Employment law, regulations and good practice are subject to continuous change.

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