

## **Working with a new manager takes good communication**

Hiring a new manager or supervisor into a business is never an easy process. Employees and supervisors take for granted the amount of communication and understanding that develops over a period of time. But when someone new comes into a supervisory position, the success of the business could be in jeopardy. A smooth transition and good communication is key to moving a successful business forward.

Marc Ankerman President of Ankerman Training Solutions, a Columbus-based training organization uses "manager assimilation" to help introduce a new supervisor or to address difficulties between a supervisor and his or her team of employees. It is a simple process that can help a new manager to get to know the team and the team to help know their new manager. Manager assimilation is a communications tool that helps get the team up and running quickly, while fostering a degree of openness and understanding between employees and their boss.

To successfully use this training tool, Ankerman recommends that it be done in the first few weeks or months after a new manager is hired. He separates the process into the following steps:

- **A facilitator meets with the manager alone.** As the first step in manager assimilation, a facilitator from either within or outside the company sits down and talks with the manager. They can discuss work habits, goals and objectives, previous experience and even family life. The main goal is to begin the dialogue and explain the process.

**The facilitator meets with the team (or employees) without the manager.** At this time, the discussion turns to the employees who are allowed to ask any questions of the manager. During this discussion, employees should address the questions of “What do we want to know about the manager?” and “What should the manager know about us?” While the setting is professional, personal questions, and even ones with a sense of humor can be encouraged.

**The manager is presented with the questions.** After the employees have drawn up a list of questions, the facilitator delivers the questions to the manager. The list of questions is typed and is submitted anonymously.

- **The manager addresses the employees.** After reviewing the questions, the manager and employees sit down together. This discussion allows the manager to answer employees’ questions and promote his or her philosophy, goals and objectives. Expectations, work styles and habits, along with rules can be explained in this setting.

The benefits to allowing this type of discussion to take place in a business are immense. Often, the assimilation process forces a difficult conversation to come about in a relatively short period of time. It also helps to make a new manager’s expectations clear to those he /she is supervising.

In one instance, a manager was scheduling meetings at 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. forcing his employees to work long hours. While the employees wanted to impress their new boss, it significantly changed their work hours. When the question of family came up in the discussion, the manager explained he had moved to accept this new job, but that his family had stayed behind. He was not even aware that he had changed his work habits and that others might not have the free time he was experiencing.

**Action Plan:**

**To have a successful manager assimilation:**

Be open and honest in the questioning process.

Be open to trying new techniques.

Remember to listen.

Recognize that new situations are always difficult.

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