Let's Talk!

By Sheena Mayers

No man is an island! We have all heard this saying before and it is very relevant to business. All managers work with a team to achieve his/her objectives. Last week my colleague examined how to create a good working culture and the first item on the list was transparent communication. Managers and business coaches who successfully lead, start by setting the right tone for their groups and this week we will look in detail at some conversations that managers should be having with their team:

1. What's happening in the lives of your team members?

What do you love most about working here? Where do you want to take your career over the next 5 years? What skills are you looking to develop? One important managerial function is coaching and mentoring and therefore these are some of the questions that you should be asking your employees. Employees are multi-dimensional people and showing an interest in them beyond their current role is very vital. It is proven that persons will work harder to make their manager "look good" if they like the manager and feel a connection to the manager. Take an interest in employees as people, and treat others with respect. As John Maxwell stated "Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far enough ahead to motivate them."

2. What are you doing wrong?

It is easy for managers to identify the limitations of employees and it is clear when an employee's performance is below standard, as it will usually impact the team and organizational objectives. However, conversations on performance should not be limited to the deficiencies of the employee but should address managerial shortfalls. Peter Drucker, a renowned management guru once stated that "most of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to get their work done". Are you impeding the performance of your team? Is there something you could do to improve the efficiency of the team? One way to identify and begin to work on personal deficiencies is to get honest feedback from your team members. Remember feedback is only useful when it is used constructively with a view of improvement.

3. What's going right?

Recognize good performance from others. I have heard managers state that they do not feel the need to congratulate or thank employees for doing the work they were hired to do. While no one is suggesting that you constantly give undeserving praise, it is paramount that praise be given when due. When good work is acknowledged, it gives encouragement for continued

performance at a high level. Additionally, an employee views a manager as fair when praise is given when due and criticism when warranted.

4. What's happening in the workplace

Share information and stay in touch. Ensure that your team is informed of organizational happenings from an authority; you. Once you have established a relationship of open communication, your team will seek clarity from you instead of reacting to misinformation. Besides sharing information top down, ask your team if there is anything that you should be aware of. Your team is in contact with customers and other departments more often than you, therefore they will be the first to notice trends and issues.

5. What's the big picture

The NISE survey highlighted that employee engagement is a concern for both the public and private sector. What is known is that employees don't get up looking to make a huge profit, in many cases they don't understand how their job translates into a bigger, more successful company. Understanding the mission or purpose of the company helps employees to feel as though their job is important. Explaining how an employee's role fits into the wider organizational picture will impact on their level of engagement and participation in the workplace.

A dedicated and cohesive team is a requirement for success in today's business environment and one necessary step in establishing such a team is effective communication. While the above list is not exhaustive remember to include these 5 topics when talking with your team.