

How to Set a Bad Manager on a Better Path

By Dr. John Drozdal

For the *Albuquerque Journal*, "FROM THE EXECUTIVE'S DESK," Thursday, October 27, 2005

FROM THE EXECUTIVE'S DESK: Stories about the boss from hell dominate happy-hour conversations and Internet chatter. Search on the keywords "bad manager" on Google and you'll get 7,160,000 hits! You will also find entire Web sites, such as www.badmanager.com and www.badbossology.com, devoted to stories about bad bosses and strategies for dealing with them.

Aside from getting a lot of attention, bad managers can also be the bane of any organization. John Sullivan, a professor of human resources at San Francisco State University, reports that upwards of 80 percent of employees who leave an organization leave for reasons related to a bad boss. Also, three of the four reasons that Barry Milligan gave for employee turnover in an essay Aug. 4 on this page—poor communication, mismanagement, and the lack of recognition and reward—also implicate a bad manager.

So why are there so many bad managers?

Apart from kindergarten, where a teacher evaluates a child on his or her ability to "work and play well with others," most of formal education teaches and rewards students to be individual contributors. Even at the top MBA programs, there is little practical guidance on how to get work done through others as a manager.

So what can companies do to curtail the epidemic of bad managers and create good ones? Here are several proven steps businesses can take:

- **Help managers be self-aware.** Each company needs to identify the critical competencies for its managers and use 360-degree feedback to help them see how they are performing against these competencies. Most "bad managers" have blind spots about the negative impact they may have on others—they can't improve on areas they don't know about.
- **Help managers with style differences.** We often hear the term management style. Effective managers and

executives understand their own style preferences and can modify or bend their style to meet the needs of their direct reports. Instruments such as the MBTI®, the FIRO-B™, and the Situational Leadership® II model can help managers build an understanding of their own style and its impact on others.

- **Help managers manage performance.** Being a manager at any level means "getting work done through others" and that means providing clear goals and giving feedback to direct reports about how they are doing on meeting those goals. All employees—at all levels of an organization—want to know what is expected of them and they desire regular feedback on how they are doing and not just in the context of their annual performance appraisal.

I worked with a CEO of a large multinational company who assumed that his six high-level direct reports knew what to do and really didn't need feedback from him. He was very surprised when he learned that they really did want his regular feedback and so he instituted bi-weekly meetings to review goal progress.

- **Evaluate managers on both what they accomplish and how they do it.** Most businesses are results-oriented and well they should be. However, a manager that consistently delivers great results but leaves a trail of wreckage in the process is a potential liability to the organization. So it is important for all organizations to evaluate the performance of a manager not only on what he or she accomplishes, but also on the behaviors that manager uses to get results and to be willing to take appropriate action when necessary.

Bad managers are not bad people and most can transform their behaviors with some help. ■

NAME: John Drozdal

TITLE: Principal and president

COMPANY: The Drozdal Company in Albuquerque (www.drozdalcompany.com) does organization development and training for managers and work groups.

All content copyright ©2005 ABQJournal.com and Albuquerque Journal. Reprinted with permission.

URL: <http://www.abqjournal.com/biz/outlook/402187outlook10-27-05.htm>

jdrozdal@drozdalcompany.com

www.drozdalcompany.com

Albuquerque, NM: 505.822.1468



TheDrozdalCompany

Strong Managers, Strong Teams, Strong Companies