

■ Make Promises You Can Keep

By Dr. John Drozdal

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Earlier this fall I was in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to facilitate a management development program for new managers. During my stay, I had an opportunity to watch my grandson Kyle play soccer. The coach of his U10 traveling team had told Kyle that because he had shown so much improvement during the summer, he was now one of the players who would play the entire game. Kyle was thrilled to know I would get to see him in extended action.

When I arrived at the start of the match, I noticed that Kyle was not on the field. As the game progressed, he played only sparingly. After the game, Kyle was noticeably confused, wondering what he had done that led the coach to break his promise. After a brief conversation between the coach and Kyle's dad, it was clear Kyle hadn't done anything wrong. In fact, the coach only had complimentary things to say about my

grandson. The coach had simply forgotten what he had promised.

There are managers and business owners who make promises to employees about promotions, raises, new responsibilities and about "how things will be different" only to renege on the deal later. In addition to leaving employees bewildered, failing to deliver on a promise creates a huge credibility and trust problem for a manager. James Kouzes and Barry Posner's *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It* examines the idea that the fundamental way to gain credibility is to "do what you say you will do." The book also points to the way to lose credibility and the trust of those around you: DO NOT "do what you say you will do." When a manager makes a promise and then does not keep it, his or her credibility with employees diminishes no matter what the reason for the broken promise. ■

Dr. John Drozdal, Principal Consultant and President of The Drozdal Company, provides organizational development and training services to teach managers and workgroups how to get work done by and through others in a way that is both satisfying and effective. His recent clients include General Mills, Pulte Homes, The Nature Conservancy, Land O'Lakes, and Xcel Energy. In addition to starting The Drozdal Company in 1991, Dr. Drozdal's experience in organizational development includes more than 15 years as a practicing manager in both the public and private sectors, as well as a doctorate in educational leadership and an MBA. Contact Dr. John Drozdal at 822-1468 or jdrozdal@drozdalcompany.com.

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