
*Entelechy's Newsletter for Trainers, Managers, HR Professionals and Others
Responsible for the Performance of Others*

IN THIS ISSUE:

Is Managing Employees Like Raising Children?

Words of Encouragement

How To Discourage and Encourage Communication

IS MANAGING EMPLOYEES LIKE RAISING CHILDREN?

We are currently customizing our *High Performance Management* program for a client and, as part of the needs analysis, we've been interviewing line supervisors for insights and input regarding their approach to managing their staff.

Yesterday in an interview, one supervisor, struggling to describe what made her one of the most effective supervisors in the organization, blurted out, "Well, it's like raising kids." Her face turned red with embarrassment and she stammered trying to retract this politically incorrect statement. As a parent, a manager, and a management trainer, I smiled because I know what she meant.

As a parent, a manager, and a management trainer, I think that the analogy fits and we should embrace it rather than be embarrassed by our thoughts. I think managing people is like raising kids because:

1. You need to set clear expectations. It's unfair to the employee or child if you haven't been clear in describing what needs to be done, when, and why.
2. Employees and children want and need consequences – both positive and negative – for their actions. If you don't think this is true for employees, try being part of a team where the manager never reprimands unacceptable behavior such as repeated tardiness, sloppy work, or rudeness; you can bet that 9 of the 10 team members are

hoping to see some negative consequences doled out! (And if you've every been in line at a grocery store with a misbehaving child you'll appreciate the power of appropriately applied negative consequences!)

3. Consequences need to be natural and motivational. For children, this means that screaming in line at the grocery store means that you go home and go on a time-out; you don't get the candy you don't get to play outside until your time-out is over. For employees, positive consequences often mean genuine praise and thanks for a job well done.
4. Speaking of motivation, negative motivation (i.e., "Do this or else.") never works in the long run – for kids or adults.
5. Consequences need to be positive for positive behavior and negative for negative behavior. We all cringe at the parent who bribes the temper-tantrum throwing child with candy. Yet, when an employee performs sloppily or inaccurately, what do we do? We relieve them of the work and give it to our good employees! Who's being rewarded and who's being punished.
6. Good management and good parenting is hard work. Good managers and parents work 100% of the time at managing or parenting. Good manager and parents know that their success will be measured by the success of their prodigy.
7. Good managers and good parents look for or create learning opportunities. Good managers allow mistakes and help the employee learn and grow from those mistakes. Parents know that their job is NOT to create dependent, mindless offspring, but mold and shape well-adjusted, confident, happy young adults.
8. Good managers and parents know when to teach, when to coach/guide, and when to lay down the law.
9. Good managers and parents focus on behavior and performance, not on personality or the person. "You're lazy," results in bitterness, frustration, hopelessness, and shame – whether you're 12, 34, or 56. "I appreciate your help," goes miles whether you're a five-year-old clearing the table or a senior engineer completing the specs for a widget.
10. Employees and children thrive with structure. Not oppressive, mind-numbing, insidious, arcane rules, but guidelines and rules by which we can all get along and work together. No throwing sand at another, no hitting, be kind. Whether you're playing in the sandbox or in a project meeting, structure helps.

11. Employees and children like to be heard. Good managers and parents like to listen.
12. Good managers and parents are unabashedly proud of their charges. This pride can be overheard in hallway conversations, the attention paid to their needs, and the support they give.
13. Good managers and parents take responsibility for their employees and children. Each employee or child has strengths and weaknesses. The good parent knows how to accentuate the strengths and develop the weaknesses.
14. And finally, good parents and good managers have an underlying faith in the intentions and capabilities of their children and employees. Whether you think you have “good” employees/children or “bad” employees/children, you’ll be proven correct. The expectations you have of your employees or children – good or bad – will manifest themselves. Be a good manager/parent – believe in the godness of your employees/children.

This information comes from *Coaching for Performance*, a module in Entelechy’s *High Performance Management* program. You can purchase the source files to this training and customize the training to meet your company’s specific needs. Check out all you get at <http://unlockit.com/HPM-CP.htm>.

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WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

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Good managers are fun to work for. They seem to know how to bring out the best in people, even people who struggle. Good managers know how to provide words of encouragement, words that motivate, inspire, and build confidence.

Encouragement is:

- Valuing and accepting employees as they are.
- Pointing out the positive aspects of behavior.

- Showing confidence in employees so they will believe in themselves.
- Recognizing effort and improvement in addition to achievement.
- Showing appreciation for contributions.

Good managers use phrases that demonstrate ACCEPTANCE:

- “I like the way you handled that.”
- “I’m glad you’re pleased with it.”
- “Since you’re not satisfied, what do you think you can do so that you will be pleased with it?”
- “It looks as if you enjoyed that.”
- “How do you feel about it?”

Good managers use phrases that show CONFIDENCE:

- “Knowing you, I’m sure you’ll do fine.”
- “You’ll make it!”
- “I have confidence in your judgment.”
- “That’s a rough one, but I’m sure you’ll be able to work it out.”
- “You’ll figure it out.”

Good managers use phrases that focus on CONTRIBUTIONS:

- “Thanks; that helped a lot.”
- “It was thoughtful of you.”
- “Thanks, I really appreciate _____ because it makes my job easier.”
- “I need your help on _____.”
- “You are good at _____; could you help me out?”

Good managers use phrases that recognize EFFORT and IMPROVEMENT:

- “It looks as if you really worked hard on that.”
- “Look at the progress you’ve made.”
- “You’re improving in _____ (be specific).”

Good managers use words of encouragement. Try some of the above phrases with sincerity and see the impact they have on your employees.

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HOW TO DISCOURAGE AND ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION

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Communication is arguably one of the most important skills good managers possess. Good managers are good communicators. I DON'T mean that good managers are necessarily great orators or charismatic evangelists. No, good managers are good at voicing their needs, explaining the work that needs to be done, listening, paraphrasing, and simplifying. Good managers encourage communication.

Let's look at how we discourage and encourage communication. See if you recognize your own communication patterns!

According to Dr. Jack R. Gibb in his book, Trust: A New View of Personal and Organizational Development, there are six behaviors that DISCOURAGE communication:

- 1) **Judging**: Evaluating and discounting other people's ideas; implying that their ideas are wrong, or their perceptions invalid.
- 2) **Superiority**: Communicating a feeling of arrogance or confidence at the expense of the other person; implying that the other cannot possibly be right because of obvious inadequacies compared to you or your position.
- 3) **Certainty**: Communicating in a manner that implies you know all the answers and have thought of all the alternatives (except for the bad ones that the other person is coming up with!); implying that you don't need additional information.
- 4) **Controlling**: Trying to direct or reposition the other's ideas, thoughts, or perceptions by imposing a set of values or beliefs on them.
- 5) **Manipulating**: Using deception and false emotion to achieve one's own ends rather than reaching empathy with the other person.
- 6) **Indifference**: Communicating a lack of interest or concern for the feelings or welfare of the other person; implies that the other's perceptions, ideas, or thoughts are of little importance.

Entelechy has defined six behaviors – ways of communicating – that ENCOURAGE communication:

- 1) **Helpful:** Your communication should be for the intent of supporting the employee's performance. Treat all employees as professionals: with respect and dignity.
- 2) **Unbiased:** Information should be first-hand, truthful, and credible. Don't pass on rumors. Feedback should focus on observable behaviors or results.
- 3) **Balanced:** Information should balance the needs of the organization with the needs of the individual. Communicate with empathy; at the same time, communicate with a firm sense of reality (avoid fluff).
- 4) **Specific:** Information – especially feedback – should be specific. Avoid generalities and references to vague elements. Instead, note specific observable behaviors that you saw and results that occurred as a consequence.
- 5) **Clear:** Avoid confusion and the chance of misunderstanding by speaking clearly, concisely, and precisely.
- 6) **Consistent:** Communicate equally to all team members. Avoid the perception of having favorite employees. Communicate on a regular basis. Communicate in predictable ways.

These six encouraging behaviors are the mark of a true professional, someone worthy of respect, someone employees will look to as a leader.

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