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Fecha del Informe: 12/11/2018

HOW TO BE A BETTER MANAGER

Great managers, like great sushi, are hard to find. Mediocrity abounds, despite the plethora of tips, techniques and training available these days to help improve the skills of those who oversee their colleagues in the frenetic, geographically disparate modern workplace.

Performance reviews offer one way for a manager's own skills to be assessed, but what does a good manager look like? Are good management skills a product of nature or nurture?

Malcolm Johnson, head of the Australian Institute of Management, has summarised the qualities of a good manager through the "four C's":

1. The collective. Good managers recognise and use the collective leadership skills available within the workplace. "Everyone can serve as a leader, it doesn't just have to be the person with that role. There are people who have some magnificent skills and experience who aren't necessarily adopted as leaders but can exercise management and leadership."
2. Compassion and respect for others.
3. Concurrent leadership. "People in a team can serve as leaders at the same time. Really effective managers and leaders demonstrate that leadership almost from behind? like shepherds with a flock. A good leader is someone who lets people go forward with their own enthusiasm and insights."
4. Collaboration. All members pitch in and maintain a mutual dialogue.

While leadership skills appear to come naturally to some, the intricacies of today's workplace have forced managers to abandon old methods of "command and control" and adapt to employees' diverse needs and skills while meeting the demand for greater flexibility from customers and workers.

Companies had become more geographically dispersed and interconnected since the global finance crisis, forcing employees to work with and through a wide array of colleagues.

Research also shows one in eight middle managers displayed risky management traits, such as poor decision-making and weak communication. Managers needed to abandon "toxic" leadership practices such as undermining and marginalising employees, open themselves to new ideas and be prepared to force change on negative workplace cultures.

OPINION

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