

## How to Make Your Employees Feel Like Superheroes

By: Patty Azzarello; September 18, 2012

I once got this in a message from a former employee:

“When I worked for you, I thought I was Superman. I have occasionally reflected on why that was. Not sure I know all the answers, but the things I do know are that the environment was real, the energy was high, and the crap was low.”

It was wonderful to get that message. Those first 10 words sum up for me, in a pretty profound way, what I believe being a good leader is about.

I used to wonder why I was so lucky to have such remarkable, talented, experienced people want to work for me. I realized that a big part of it boiled down to what was in that note:

1. I got the right people in the right roles.
2. I let them be amazing.
3. I got the crap out of the way (people really liked this!).

Here's how you can tackle each step to foster employee satisfaction and a memorable culture:

### **1. Get the right people in the right roles.**

Are you leading the team you need? Or are you leading the team you have?

There is nothing more important as a leader than to build a team underneath you that is so capable that you can free yourself up to solve higher-order problems. Too many managers think the job is to make the best of the team they have. That is not the job.

The job is to develop, and if necessary change, the people—so you get individuals who are well suited for their roles, and a highly capable team that can do what the business needs now and in the future.

If you find yourself needing over and over again to personally step in to make key decisions or do strategic work that you hoped one of your staff would handle, you have someone in the wrong role. You need to make a change.

I realize this sounds harsh. But you have choices and you don't need to be a bad person to build a great team. The good news is that getting the right people in the right roles is great for them, it's great for you, and it's great for the business. There is no downside except that it's hard to do. So...

**GUT CHECK:** Is your desired outcome to grow the business or to keep people in their jobs?

Here are your choices:

- **Grow the business:** If your desired outcome is to grow the business, then you need to get the right people in the right jobs and eliminate the people who are not capable enough.
- **Keep jobs:** If your desired outcome is to have people keep their jobs you have two choices:
  - Move them to different, lower, or sideways jobs, and free up the key jobs to be filled by stronger people.
  - If you can't or won't do this, then don't waste time and energy signing your business up for strategic growth. If you are not going to change the people, find a less ambitious business model you can execute with the team you have.

## 2. Let people be amazing.

Okay. Now that you have the right team of highly capable people, give them important work, support them, step back, and let them be amazing.

Don't just delegate work. Delegate power.

Let people make big decisions and solve big problems. Let them do great work they can be proud of.

Give them recognition. Be an active spokesperson for their efforts. Show them trust and respect, and make sure they get the credit for their accomplishments—they will move mountains for you.

*Get out of their way!*

## 3. Get the crap out of the way.

As a leader a key part of your job is to create a work environment that is good to work in.

Uncertainty, worry, and unnecessary complexity all drain energy and trust out of the organization. If you want to create an environment where your people can thrive, you need to actively and continually remove the sand that creeps into gears.

Here are some ideas to get rid of the de-motivating crap.

- Remove uncertainty:
  - Make, clarify, and communicate decisions.
  - Don't let questions and rumors fester.
  - Don't leave people to wonder what is important, or which direction to go.
- Remove negativity:
  - Discourage unproductive, negative talk. No one can complain without offering a proposal.
  - Eliminate people who drain energy out of the organization.
  - Remove any managers who are bullies, or who block communication.
- Be accountable:
  - Have clear plans with measures and accountability.
  - Address missed deadlines with consequences and action plans. (You'd be surprised how much positive energy this creates.)
  - Face up to, and fix broken strategies.

## Find the magic

When you get someone in the right role right that aligns with their natural strengths, abilities, and ambitions, magic happens.

They thrive. They grow. They do amazing things. They feel proud of what they do. They are motivated and energized.

When you get a whole team of people who are in the right roles, the team becomes unstoppable. And then you are free to look forward and lead (and keep vigilant at removing the crap, which takes actual time).

Your job as a leader is to create that team—a team that can amplify what you can do. Otherwise you are at the helm of a team that is constrained by you, not led by you.

<http://www.fastcompany.com/3001328/how-make-your-employees-feel-superheroes>