

An extract from a talk given by a management training leader.

Optional exercise

Match these idiomatic expressions from the talk with their definitions.

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| 1. To bury one's head in the sand | a. An important point |
| 2. A golden rule | b. To ignore a problem |
| 3. To get someone's back up | c. To closely observe what someone is doing |
| 4. To breathe down someone's neck | d. To irritate or annoy someone |

So really what we are talking about most of the time is simply a case of common sense. There is nothing revolutionary - or even new - here. The trouble is that most managers tend to forget about developing their own managerial skills as soon as they become a manager. There is a certain sense of irony in this, don't you think?

Let's move on and talk about a few more of these issues. One thing that I have come across again and again is the situation in which managers pretend that change is not happening. But when change *is* happening, this is the worst thing they can do. It's like burying one's head in the sand. Your staff will know that something is up and wonder why you are being secretive – or worse – dishonest. So – communicate. Tell your staff exactly what is happening and give them opportunities to ask questions. Everybody will come out winning because honesty is always the best policy.

Sharing information is a golden rule of management. Sometimes there's a tendency to keep things to one's self but this isn't usually the best. Imagine a situation where you are thinking about approaching a new client, for example. If we only communicate this information to our immediate management team, then we might well be neglecting to tell somebody who is potentially the ideal person to come up with an idea to make contact with this new client – for whatever reason. There are other scenarios too – work can get duplicated and – even worse – people can get offended. We don't want to get anybody's back up!

Staff need to feel that they are trusted to work independently and manage their own workloads. It's a proven fact that workers in this environment are happier and are more productive. As managers we should learn to micro-manage – to make sure that staff know exactly what they're supposed to be doing and then just let them get on with it. We should never breathe down their necks. That isn't going to help anybody.

Another very important thing to remember is that your employees may not understand your jargon – or "management speak". And why should they? You might have spent weeks discussing issues and making decisions – weeks when you are using acronyms with other members of the management team. When you finally come around to communicating these ideas with the rest of the department the terms are familiar to you – but remember that the terms are new for everybody else – so explain what the terminology means – or – better still – avoid using it. Because people who use jargon all the time come over as being patronising.

As we get to the end of this talk, I'd like to mention something that – for me – is probably the most important piece of advice of all. Don't forget your sense of humour. Being able to share a joke at work is priceless. We have to be able to laugh at ourselves too and not take ourselves too seriously. Of course, there is a time and place for humour – but a good manager will instinctively know when the time is right.

Answers 1 b, 2 a, 3 d, 4 c