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Embedding Psychological health and wellbeing at work

A brief guide to the Psychology of
Management encouragement

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Case study

A senior manager, responsible for the supervision and mentoring of a graduate management trainee, asks the trainee to conduct a survey of all the employees to establish how well the manager-employee relationship is perceived. The trainee has considerable experience for someone so young, having worked in various caring capacities around the world, achieved great results at University and been working for VSO in a responsible capacity in Africa. The trainee is exactly the kind of recruit that the organisation seeks to fast track towards top management.

The trainee devised the survey, obtained clearance from his supervisor, and proceeded according to plan. Once the results were in and the report prepared, the trainee prepared himself to submit the findings and discuss the implications. He sent the report to his supervisor prior to the meeting.

At the meeting the supervisor is furious with the results, which show that there is a gap in the relationship between managers and employees, and a lack of confidence in the supervisor's ability to manage. The supervisor turns on the trainee, accusing him of colluding with the employees, or devising a survey that would provide biased results, and generally blaming the trainee for the results.

The trainee is reduced to tears, and believes he has no future with the organisation. He talks to the head of the training scheme, who finds the reaction of the supervisor unbelievable and seeks external advice on how to tackle the supervisor, and restore the confidence of the trainee.

Outcome

With our help the supervisor entered into a coaching programme designed to help him understand his role as a manager and supervisor of young, inexperienced management trainees who have achieved much in a short time. It was pointed out that the findings had nothing to do with the trainee and everything to do with him and his failure to manage his staff effectively. We, also, provided counselling and support to the trainee, who, having recovered from the experience, realised that his supervisor was 'old school' with a misplaced belief that he was perfect in every way, and that the survey should have shown this. The trainee was re-assured that this will not be the last time he will experience such managers, and the counselling was directed towards making the trainee resilient to such managers and their reactions, and providing him with techniques and approaches for gaining their commitment to him and his work.

Brief guidance

1. Managers at all levels are role models for others. They, therefore, need to be capable of managing people, and strong enough to provide trainees with a broad range of opinion and views about every management challenge including challenges to their own management capability.
2. Employees like to be given new challenges as this indicates that the organisation values their contribution. This helps cement commitment and trust in the organisation, and provides a psychologically healthy workplace where people are encouraged to develop their ideas and implement them.
3. Trainees are normally at the start of their career. Managers need to be aware that it is important to retain trainees so that they can make a long lasting contribution to the development of the organisation.

Our role

- We provide leadership and management development programmes that focus on creating and sustaining commitment and trust between managers and their staff.
- We provide individual coaching and mentoring to leaders and managers in the challenges facing management, and in their role as role models for others.

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