

**The Duh! Approach To Management and Supervision:
Dispelling Common Leadership Myths
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People are promoted because they're good at their jobs. Being in a leadership position is a very different job, for which most are not trained. Why they're not trained is a bit of a mystery. It's as though colleges and professional schools don't expect their graduates to move beyond the entry level.

Interestingly, well-intentioned managers, doing their best to be good organizational leaders, often repeat unhelpful supervisory practices experienced in their early careers, even if they disliked them at the time.

Here are just a few commonly held beliefs that I dare to call myths. They are meant to start the conversation.

Those at the top should present a united front. Presumably you gather a variety of people when addressing concerns and making decisions because you want diverse input. You can be united around the final decision but share your struggles and areas of disagreement so employees know that their viewpoints were represented.

All change should be embraced. Positive change is just as stressful as negative change because with every gain there is a loss. Empathize with those who are struggling and offer them training and support rather than insisting that they immediately "get on board."

If finances, product alignment and geography are compatible, mergers and acquisitions will go smoothly. It is said that 40%-60% of mergers and acquisitions fail because of a lack of cultural integration. Easily solved if time is spent at the outset engaging in cultural mapping and conversations with employees at all levels of the organizations. The people who do the job every day know how to solve the problems.

Email is a communication panacea. As wonderful as the technology is, it has caused more miscommunication than almost any other vehicle because people read emails in the mood they're in, not in the mood they were sent. After 2 tense exchanges, STOP emailing and talk in person. It will not get better.

Stress is the result of hard work. It is not. It's the result of not accomplishing what you want to accomplish. If you do everything on your list, you're likely to be tired but not stressed. If you hoped to do 10 things and only do 3, it's the gap that causes the stress. Most report that

interruptions prevent getting everything done. Just think, if interruptions were on your list, you could check something off.

Conflict results from difficult personalities. Actually, the two major reasons for conflict in organizations are role confusion and lack of a clear process. Resolve them and conflict will dissipate.

“Customer First” is a worthwhile mantra. Try “Employees First!” Happy and satisfied employees result in happy customers. If employees are treated well, the customer experiences the positive fallout.

A blame-free workplace prevents accountability. Accountability increases in non-punitive environments because when something goes wrong it is not about who’s at fault but how do we prevent it from happening again. Employees are more willing to admit to mistakes and problems can be resolved early on.

Shared power means everyone has their way. Everyone needs their say but not everyone needs their way. However, they do need to know why they didn’t get their way. People are usually cool when they hear the rationale, but they are not ok if they’re ignored.

All forms of feedback are good. Feedback is only worthwhile if the recipients can do something about it. To say “you’re too tall” is not helpful. Of course, no one would say that but we do say, “Change your attitude,” or “Be more conscientious.” People need to know exactly how improvement will be measured.

Staff meetings should only take place when the supervisor/boss is in attendance. Do they take place when the administrative assistant isn’t there? Probably. It’s not true that the person with the highest status is the only important member of the group.

Creating a gossip-free environment is impossible. It is not but it takes about a year to get there. It’s based on the notion that we talk to people instead of about them. If someone complains about a co-worker, you can still be supportive by asking how you can help him or her talk directly with that person. By the way, that includes employees talking about colleagues with their supervisors.

There’s no time to deal with all this. Do you have time not to? The time that you spend now is likely to save a whole lot of time later.

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