



From Bud Haney: *Are you maximizing the potential of your frontline managers?*

Feature Article: *Six Keys to Unlocking the Potential of Frontline Managers*

Feature Products: *ProfileXT® and Profiles Managerial Fit™*

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Announcements

Did You Know?

FROM BUD HANEY'S DESK

Are you maximizing the potential of your frontline managers?

Frontline managers have difficult jobs. They have to know the business (better than their staff). They are expected to supervise and coach their employees not only on how to do their jobs, but how to do so with their right attitude and behaviors. And they have to be able to step into the breach in that inevitable moment when a disgruntled customer utters the words "I'd like to speak to your manager."

Most businesses have gotten so large that there is a considerable divide between the executive team and frontline. Frontline staff perform different functions depending on the industry: in retail they're cashiers and sales clerks; in healthcare, they're triage nurses and doctors and administrative staff; in travel they're flight attendants and reservationists; and in the service sector, they're call center staff.

Customers are demanding, and why shouldn't they be? If they're willing to spend their money on your product or service instead of patronizing your competitors, they should have a pleasant experience (or at least not have an unpleasant experience). And if something goes wrong, the best companies have

frontline staff and managers who are trained and skilled at fixing the situation, which can make or break a customer for life.

Imagine being in the unfortunate position of being a frontline manager at the stadium earlier this month whose staff had to tell 400 ticket holders that they **couldn't sit in seats they had paid for to watch the Super Bowl**. This situation is ripe as a case study in so many things, but for a moment, consider the skills and attributes needed to successfully weather a similar situation in your business: empathetic and understanding; confident, but not arrogant (or panicky); informed and empowered.

Coach your frontline managers. Instill in them the company's values and remind them of the pivotal role they play in representing the company to its customers. Help them to be as efficient as possible while empowering them with the flexibility to resolve customer issues quickly and to their satisfaction. Take a look at how your customers interact with your business, especially your frontline staff and managers. Are they an asset or a liability? This **month's newsletter highlights the importance of frontline managers** and offers advice on developing those in your organization.

Sincerely,

Bud Haney

Bud Haney, President
Profiles International



FEATURE ARTICLE: Six Keys to Unlocking the Potential of Frontline Managers

The effects of poor frontline management may be particularly damaging at service companies, where researchers have consistently detected a relationship between the attitudes and behaviors of customer-facing employees on the one hand, and customer perception of service quality on the other.

In service industries, research has found that three factors drive performance:

- the work climate;
- the ways teams act together and the ways that things are done; and
- the engagement, commitment, and satisfaction of employees.

Leadership—particularly the quality of supervision and the nature of the relationships between supervisors and their teams—is crucial to performance in each of these areas.

We have identified Six Keys to Unlocking the Potential of Frontline Managers

1. Identify employees with the capability and interest to be good managers by:

- Using assessments to identify employees who demonstrate the behaviors and interests that will make them successful managers.
- Helping managers understand the core behaviors, capabilities, and preferences of the people they manage so that they can adapt their communication and management styles to get the most from their people.
- Helping managers develop the mindset that they will be more successful if the people they manage succeed. This helps managers become invested in the success of each individual.

2. Help managers clarify their teams' goals and roles by:

- Using these goals to create a personal "dashboard" that helps the manager set his own priorities that drive results. Require the manager to update his goals weekly, and use his progress to facilitate a coaching discussion. Finally, check back with the manager on a periodic basis to ensure that his priorities and the individuals on his team are properly aligned.
- Creating tools to help your managers communicate these requirements and track progress toward these goals. Seek direct input from frontline employees in the form of employee surveys and 360° management assessments to determine if the message is getting through. Finally, encourage open communication between

employees and their managers in order to clarify job requirements and eliminate work that doesn't add sufficient value.

3. When helping managers better understand the people they manage, consider these points:

- Human beings are complex creatures that can be very hard for the average manager to read, especially in the early stages of the working relationship. Ironically, this is when the manager needs the most help. A valid assessment process can be very helpful for an organization to develop a deeper and more objective understanding of its people.
- Helping a manager to understand his people's skills, behaviors, and interests helps him build on his people's strengths and mitigate their weaknesses. It helps the manager communicate better with the employee, zero in on the employee's most critical developmental needs, and focus both informal coaching dialogue and formal training and development investments in the employee.

4. Help your managers understand themselves and how they impact their people.

- Management is all about people, and this requires a high degree of self-awareness. Managers should go through the same assessment process as their employees in order to understand how their innate behaviors, interests, and skills either complement or hinder their personal interactions.
- It is also extremely valuable for managers to receive feedback from multiple constituents, including their supervisors, peers, and subordinates, to illuminate developmental needs, misalignments, and other issues that may be difficult to communicate openly under challenging circumstances.

5. Don't assume your managers know how or even when to coach. These two action steps can help:

- Develop the fundamental coaching skills of your managers, and develop a culture of coaching.
- Help your manager understand his leadership style and motivation. Many of us have a number of key leadership qualities, but we still need feedback so that we can build on our strengths and fortify our weaknesses. In some cases where it is clear that a manager really isn't ready to lead, the discovery process can help identify other career options that are better suited to his style and abilities.

Partner Contact Information