Richard I. Segal of RFB + Fisher Potter Hodas. Courtesy photo

COMMENTARY

Less Management and More Authenticity, Genuineness, and Mentorship

Let's embrace the changing workforce demographic and replace the concept of "management" with AGM—a short and easy acronym I fashioned for encouraging three important concepts in leadership: authenticity, genuineness, and mentorship.

March 18, 2024 at 10:15 AM

⏱ 5 minute read

Board of Contributors

By Richard I. Segal | March 18, 2024 at 10:15 AM

As the workforce rapidly expands to include the next generation of employees that grew up in an on-demand culture and a communicative environment filled less with penned letters and more with acronyms such as IMHO (in my humble opinion), TBH (to be honest), and BTW (by the way), the workplace must adapt, pivot and recognize that the concept of management must change.

IMHO, the word "management" should be cancelled. TBH, it has reached its expiration date. BTW, that does not mean that there should not be leadership and guidance in the workforce— there absolutely should be. However, the days of calling an employee or emailing them and saying "management wants to see you" must end in order for a company to be relatable, encourage productivity, and build long lasting social capital.

Let's embrace the changing workforce demographic and replace the concept of "management" with AGM—a short and easy acronym I fashioned for encouraging three important concepts in leadership: authenticity, genuineness, and mentorship.

Management feels like it is a person or group that looks down and observes the employees from a tower. It immediately feels like employees must climb to some high place to visit "management." True leaders are never perceived as higher than or above the team. True leaders are never in charge of the team rather they are a part of it. True leaders are never the boss but rather an integral part of the team that others, by choice, look to for guidance. Remove the word "boss." No one happily associates with a "bossy" person or willingly wants to be "bossed" around. So, let's get rid of the term. We are not bosses anymore.

That already feels lighter, doesn't it? We are leaders on a team. Everyone likes to work with a leader.

Whether or not someone holds the title "managing partner," "chairperson" or "president," the titles connote overtime and foster a preconceived notion of a level of hierarchy and distinction. We should remove the "management" hierarchy and step down from the ladder. While it may be a mere matter of syntax and words, it is vital in order to be a leader in today's world.

In comes AGM. Establishing AGM in any office, boardroom or workplace is not easy. It takes practice. It comes riddled with mistakes and second guessing, but good leaders learn and adapt to do better for themselves, the employees and the company.

Authenticity—Management feels stuffy and sometimes not approachable. Instead, as a leader, create authenticity, which fosters approachability. Do not be afraid of being open with your team, as they will equally be authentic and open back up to you. When you are at lunch with your team (and yes, you must consistently go to lunch with your team), do not just ask questions or inquire, but share yourself. Be a human, not a manager or a boss. Authenticity develops trust. A team that is trusting allows for the team to truly rely upon each other and work together to produce the best product and achieve ultimate goals.

Genuineness—Management is often done from a different office in a different state or behind closed doors in "management committee" meetings. This seems closed off. Of course, there still needs to be meetings on the direction of the company. Of course, the finances of the company and the future growth needs must be analyzed, however, it is important that the team knows that their leader is in it with them and not leading from afar. That the leader cares: Genuineness. When a leader talks to their team about growth, needs, billable hours, expectations, and the like, they should not just make the discussion about business. They should focus also on how the team's professional and personal growth is progressing, and take interest. This then allows the leader to guide the team but does not come off as dictating or demanding.

Mentorship—Don't manage the team, instead create and foster mentorship. Protect the team and defend them. Mentor and build the team up, never accuse or attack them. A good leader recognizes and identifies opportunities to mentor the team by taking mistakes or mishaps and productively addressing any shortfalls to better the team going forward. Mentors promote growth and learning in the workforce and out. Mentors share experiences both positive and negative. A mentor should share their faults, failures, and fallibility. Sometimes, as a leader and a mentor, it is important to show that leaders have missteps along the way too—this bolsters the mentees' mental strength and fortitude to persevere through inevitable trying times in life and the workforce.

There certainly will be managers that are unwilling to let go of the concept of "management" or that disagree with AGM. There will be managers that believe there must be management and a hierarchy in order to successfully run a company. I hear it now; management has been here since the inception of the workforce and must remain. Remember those who did not want to move from the Blackberry to the iPhone? I still recall the naysayers saying that the iPhone is not meant for business and that there will be serious security issues. In time, even in the business world, we change.

So, to those that are hanging on to the Blackberry mindset when it comes to management, it is NP (no problem), just LMK (let me know) when you are ready, and I am happy to discuss AGM. YOLO (you only live once), so why not try to foster the best working environment possible?

Richard I. Segal *is a founding partner and co-managing partner of the Miami office of RFB + Fisher Potter Hodas, a national litigation boutique concentrating on complex, high-net-worth matrimonial disputes. Segal is also chairman of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit rfbllp.com.*