

COACHING TIP

From Rex C. Houze

“NO NEWS” KILLS BEHAVIOR

“No news is good news” is a destructive philosophy when it comes to bringing out the best in people. Average managers will spend equal time with everyone or, worse yet, spend most of their time with problem people they call “high maintenance.” Great managers spend more time with their top producers.

Talent is a multiplier. The more attention and energy you invest in it, the greater the yield. The time you spend with your best performers is your most productive time.

At its simplest, a manager’s job is to encourage people to do more of certain productive behaviors and less of other, unproductive behaviors. Manager’s reactions can significantly affect which behaviors are multiplied and which gradually die out. As a manager, you are on the stage every day; you are sending signals that every employee hears.

The less you pay attention to the productive behaviors of your superstars, the less of those behaviors you will get. Since human beings are wired to get attention of some kind, if they are not getting attention, they will tend, either subconsciously or consciously, to alter their behavior until they do.

Therefore, if you pay attention to your strugglers and ignore your stars, you can inadvertently alter the behaviors of your stars. Guided by your apparent indifference, your stars may start to do less of what made them stars in the first place and more of kinds of behaviors that might net them some kind of reaction from you, good or bad. When you see your stars acting up, it is a sure sign that you have been paying attention to the wrong people and the wrong behaviors.

Keep this in mind. You are always on stage. Your misplaced time and attention is not a neutral act. No news is never good news. No news kills the very behaviors you want to multiply.

In a Gallup survey, great managers explained the benefits of spending time with their best performers as follows: first, it was the fairest thing to do; second, it was the best way to learn; and, third, it was the only way to stay focused on excellence.

Look at where you are spending your time. If you are spending too much time with strugglers, make a conscious effort to spend more time with your best performers and see how they respond. Remember, “no news” is destructive and doesn’t bring out the best in people. Positive reinforcement is constructive and gets you more of the behaviors you want.

Excerpted from *FIRST, BREAK ALL THE RULES* by Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman