

THE RULES

Rule #1. Jerks: Fire them. It's that simple. Even the talented, seemingly irreplaceable ones. Never have I witnessed a circumstance where keeping the jerk was better than letting him (or her) go. Jerks do incredible damage to morale, productivity and the mood of the company in general. Make sure you identify the jerk as the genuine article and not just an unhappy employee. But, once the identification is certain, remove them as quickly and quietly as possible.

Rule #2. Teamwork: Let's just say this, it's nothing short of amazing what can be achieved when you assemble a group of people that can work together toward a common goal. Strive for this and watch miracles happen.

Rule #3. Threats: Don't make them, ever. There are times when such witty phrases as "my way or the highway" may seem the appropriate thing to say, but it never works. Managing people by fear or intimidation is counterproductive and only one of two things can come from it; either you eventually have to fire somebody or no one believes you and even your best threats no longer scare anyone.

Rule #4. Training: There can never be enough training, especially in today's industries. Pay for training. Pay the employee to attend. In short, do everything you can do to demonstrate your commitment to training and your commitment to your employees' future with your company.

Rule #5. Employees: All the mushy stuff you read about employees being your most important asset happens to be true. Without them you are lost. They make or break any business from a lemonade stand to Microsoft. Not only do you need to be receptive to employees' requests, you need to seek out ways to acknowledge and appreciate them, even if it costs money to do so. Making an employee feel valuable, noticed, and appreciated is the best investment an employer can make. Cutting corners with your employees is, essentially, cutting your own throat. If you don't appreciate them, someone else will.

Rule #6. Honesty: I say this not out of some over-active sense of morality, but rather from a purely business standpoint. There is no short-term financial gain that outweighs the long-term return of running an ethical business. Don't compromise your integrity for anyone.

Rule #7. Rules: In general, they are a bad idea. Too many rules do nothing but stifle creative thinking. Avoid them whenever possible. Of course, the responsibilities are still there. Everyone still needs to show up on time, do their best every day, and refrain from throwing sharp objects. But these are expected standards of behavior and should not require explanation from a supervisor. If they didn't learn these things from their mother, chances are they won't learn it from you. Rather than rules, spell out objectives and goals. Give employees the latitude to achieve (or even fail) in their own way. They will, more often than not, surprise you.

Rule #8. Leadership: Leadership is not established by policy or position. Lead by example and the lemmings will follow. True leaders demonstrate commitment and conviction in everything they do.

Rule #9. Happiness: Here is the big one. Happiness = Success. There is no clearer way to say it. If your employees are happy and your customers are happy, you have won the game. Financial success is inevitable. Don't ever forget this one. All other rules pale in comparison.