

Building Success with Your Employees

I was in a meeting with a company last week when one of the project managers said he was having trouble with one of the lead carpenters he manages, and was wondering if it was wise to have that lead continue to run jobs. The owner stepped in and said that – “Having that lead be successful was the job the Project Manager was hired for. If he fails, you fail, so you need to develop a commitment and methodology that makes that guy look good.” This is an example of the kind of management that happens in a culture of accountability, its the opposite of the more traditional command-and-control style that I write about elsewhere. The above example is great management, the kind of management that inspires people to work for companies like that. When employees know and feel that you have their back, they give you everything they’ve got.

All too often I hear an owner or manager complain about the performance of someone because they are not doing what they’re told to do. The challenge in the industry is this; most managers became so from doing a good job of working their way up from being a carpenter. Nowhere along the way (rarely) did anyone get any real education in how best to manage someone. But if asked, any employee will tell you training, coaching, and support is what they want from a manager to help them reach that next level of performance. The best employees need very little, some need more than others— the point is that your largest return on investment will come from the time you invest in those key employees. We hear that in Sales, the best way to get new customers is to take care of the ones you already have, so similarly this idea applies to employees. The time that it takes to hire, train, and get a new person up to speed is a large drain on a company’s resources and time. Putting your time into improving employee performance is a win/win for everyone!