

New Style Managers Put Emphasis on “We,” Not “I”

By Niki Scott, Working Woman Column

A lot of old school corporate types are muttering to themselves nowadays: “Team-building? Consensus management? Cooperative effort? Whatever happened to ‘I’m the boss and you’ll do as I say’?”

What has happened is that corporate America has been forced to admit that old-style, hierarchical management methods just aren’t as effective as new style methods that encourage employees to feel as if we’re valuable members of a team, rather than “subordinates.”

Savvy managers have always known that people work harder if they feel like members of a team and are praised, encouraged, consulted, offered tangible incentives, and treated with respect and kindness.

How can you tell if you’re an old-style or new-style manager? If your employees are enthusiastic, dedicated, loyal and productive, you’re probably a new-style manager. Then ask yourself the following 13 questions:

1. Do I feel as if I’m part of a team? When I talk to my employees, do I use the words “we” and “us” instead of “you” or “I”?
2. Is my primary focus on what’s good for me, or what’s good for my team or the company?
3. Do I need a lot of positive reinforcement, or are my team’s hard work and results enough reinforcement?
4. Do I approach projects with an open mind – make my goals and expectations clear, then allow my team to figure out how to accomplish them?
5. Do I engage in dialogues – not monologues – when I speak to my employees?
6. Do I view all meetings as opportunities for an exchange of information, not platforms for my own opinions?
7. When I disagree with an employee’s ideas or methods, is my criticism constructive and nonpersonal?
8. If I must reprimand an employee, do I do so in private, in a calm, low-key, helpful manner, with a problem-solving rather than punitive attitude?
9. Am I sympathetic and helpful when it comes to my team members’ personal problems?

10. Am I even-handed and fair in my dealings with team members? Does each team member know exactly what I expect from him or her?
11. Do I insist that any personal differences among individual team members be either ignored or worked out?
12. Do I encourage members of my team to think for themselves, to express their ideas and opinions, to take calculated risks?
13. Do I recognize and reward effort, not just results?

If you've answered “yes” to 10 or more of these questions, congratulations: You're a new-style manager.

If you've answered “no” to 10 or more, on the other hand, run, don't walk, to your nearest library and check out six or eight how-to-books for managers.