

Central England Area Quaker Meeting Trustees' Employment Committee

A short guide to being a line manager

Introduction

Line management is more an art than a science. There is no single route to follow but there are lots of simple techniques to help it run smoothly and effectively. You could regard line management as just common sense. However you often only realise it's common sense once you have had a go and use some hindsight to reflect on what is working well and what could be done differently or better next time. It's a balancing act of providing pastoral support while ensuring the work gets done.

Communication

If there is one single aspect to successful line management that is more important than all others it is - ***“ensure clear and effective communication between the line manager and member of staff at all times”***.

Maybe the second most important thing to remember is, put yourself in the position of your member of staff and consider what they need to hear from you or might want to say to you to ensure they are working effectively and properly.

Generally, in the early days of a person being in post, more input is required from a line manager than when a member of staff has been working sometime and there is an established and productive rhythm to the work.

As a manager you should agree times and dates with your staff for regular meetings. They can be face to face or over the phone. In the early months of an appointment it is recommended that face to face meetings are more beneficial for both the members of staff and the manager. It's important to strike a balance between taking an interest in what your staff are doing and ensuring they do it well, with not micromanaging your team. This requires feel and judgement, there are no hard and fast rules.

Procedures and guidance

Central England Quakers (CEQ) has many standard procedures that offer advice and guidance that should be followed. These procedures have been put together with specialist support and advice from HR advisors. They ensure we stay within the law and represent good HR practice. You should familiarise yourself with the list of procedures and refer to them whenever you need to act on a particular topic such as recruitment or appraisals.

All staff will have a job description which sets out what the particular role involves in general terms. A job description does not normally have particular targets or specific short term requirements related to doing the job. Those are best communicated in notes of meetings or when carrying out appraisals. All staff will have conditions of employment which cover many generic aspects of their employment. CEQ Employment committee will have produced these and you should not attempt to alter them without agreeing any changes with CEQ Employment Committee.

Induction

When you have a new member of staff take a bit of time to plan an induction for them. There should be a simple written induction plan to explain all the practical things they need to know, how to contact you, what the arrangements for their pay and booking leave are etc. It can be as simple as a bullet point list. You may want to introduce them to particularly significant people who they will encounter in their job. You will probably need to explain quite a few very practical things like how they get paid. Ensuring arrangements are in place for people to be paid correctly and on time is very important - it sets a tone for the future and people may be relying on the money that they are to be paid, to arrive when they expect it. The 'Induction and Probation' procedure provides more detail.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety should be discussed at the start of a person working with CEQ. It sends a strong message that we take it seriously. There is a comprehensive policy to offer guidance to managers. However you need to take an ongoing interest in the way work is done and your staff member's wellbeing. The law requires us as employers to ensure that work is carried out safely - as a line manager you have that responsibility on behalf of CEQ. Many of our CEQ staff work alone albeit in relatively un Hazardous roles. As a manager you should think through reasonable measures to ensure the wellbeing of any staff member who works alone. It might be as simple as locking the external door when working in a building alone. The 'Health and Safety at Work' Policy has more guidance.

Taking account of disabilities

As employers we need to take account of disabilities which staff have or may develop. As a manager you should be aware of any disabilities a member of staff may have. We are required by law to make reasonable adjustments to enable staff with disabilities to carry out their job. There are no absolute definitions of reasonable and advice should be sought from Employment Committee if you are unsure as to what should be done.

Motivation and direction

As a line manager it is your job to ensure your staff member is doing what is required of them. In straightforward roles such as a cleaner or gardener this is likely to need little decision making or discretion as to how the role is performed by the member of staff. However, as a line manager you should look to provide your staff with as much opportunity to decide how to carry out work. Giving people responsibility and freedom within defined bounds is important in terms of motivating them to do the job well. In more developed and complex roles the line manager should enable the staff member to bring their skills, knowledge and experience to the fore.

As a line manager you don't need to know how to do the job of everyone you are supervising. However you do need to be clear about any boundaries you want to set and what you expect to see happening to allow you as the manager to determine whether it is a success. If you are managing a cleaner the measure of success is fairly simple i.e. the floor etc. will be swept and polished. If you are managing a project worker you need to agree what you are expecting to have happened and by when - sometimes up to a year ahead. This way both you, as the line manager, and the member of staff are clear about

what will happen and by when. Remember staff are not mind readers, as a manager you have to discuss and agree what you want to happen. The 'Appraisal and Performance Management' procedure has more guidance.

Setting a tone

Think about setting an appropriate tone at the beginning of a relationship with members of staff. What you say and the expectations you communicate are very important at the start. By being clear you avoid misunderstandings that can lead to unhappiness and dissatisfaction amongst both of you.

As a manager you might need to resolve problems that your team member is experiencing and can't deal with themselves. It may be that other users of the building are creating problems for a caretaker; it might be that different Friends of the meeting are giving conflicting advice or making overly demanding requests. Hopefully a member of staff can resolve simple problems but as a manager you ought to be aware of them and take action if needed.

Development and training

As a line manager you have a role to ensure that a member of staff is able to develop and grow in their job. Some jobs are relatively straightforward and offer limited opportunities for training and development. Whereas people in some more demanding jobs will benefit from a wide variety of training and development. Training and development can take the form of many things not just formal courses. Simply going to talk with another person who does a similar job can be useful, reading a book or useful web based material are simple and easy ways of learning skills and knowledge.

Saying thanks

It will be repaid many times over if a manager thanks and congratulates a members of staff periodically when they have done something well. Gratitude and thanks need however to be earned and genuinely given. If it seems hollow and unwarranted then the motivational effect is lost and worse still it can damage your relationship. So, say thanks and mean it when it is justified.

Disciplinary action

If things are not running well then try talking more frequently with your member of staff and make notes of your conversation about what is agreed. Ultimately if improvements are not made to your satisfaction, and you have followed the process outlined in the Appraisal and Performance Management Policy, there is a disciplinary procedure that should be followed carefully. In some circumstances a member of staff may do something or fail to do something that it warrants more than a conversation and the disciplinary procedure should be followed. In the unlikely event that a disciplinary process leads to a dismissal the employee may challenge the dismissal at an employment tribunal if the procedure has not been followed correctly. The 'Disciplinary' procedure and 'Appraisals and Performance Management' procedure have more information.