

How does your garden grow?

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One of my favourite timeouts is to potter around the garden checking the flowering bushes and tidying up our home grown vegetable project. 'Nipping it in the bud and dead heading' are old sayings and you soon learn they are imperative to the accomplishment of your garden and crops overtime. Both processes if not performed will prevent the effective growth and development of your plants and will lead to either yielding a very low crop or the death of your hard work. I have found over the years these sayings have also supported my thinking back in the workplace particularly as a man manager.

Can you remember your first man manager role? Most new managers may admit to this being one of the most vulnerable stages in their careers. Man management isn't just about supporting and developing your staff, it's about; budgets, procedures, processes, forms, performance reviews, goal setting, day to day maintenance, project management, contract management, outsourcing, human resources and many, many more accountabilities.

I found my biggest challenge was people management mainly because I believe myself to be a nice person and I like to be liked. On my first day as a manager (some years ago now) I found myself faced with a bevy of colourful personalities from the creative to thought-provoking. It was also a melting pot of different behaviours, beliefs, values and styles of working. It was certainly a learning curve that I learnt to love overtime. The knowledge and skills I gained were extremely invaluable to architect my day to day responsibilities and I still use them today.

Wasn't it the educational Stephen Covey that once wrote, 'Effective leadership is putting first things first? Effective management is discipline, carrying it out'. He also said, 'If there is no gardener there is no garden'. A good gardener will nip things in the bud and dead head where it is necessary to achieve success. These metaphors describe how we need to make room for the new. *'Nipping it in the bud' is a really common saying in England, people usually use it when giving each other advice about either someone's behaviour or towards something that needs to be stopped in its tracks - before it becomes a concerning issue. Dead heading isn't just used when referring to the clearing of dead blooms from foliage; it is also used in parts of the United States to clear a train or vehicle of its passengers to lighten its load the vehicle in turn then goes faster.*



These sayings describe how a manager should address issues or behaviour early on before they become serious or the behaviour turns out to be difficult to manage. As a new manager there is always pause for thought because we fear whether we are doing things 'correctly' or there is a human resource question. In truth new managers have starting points which they should set early on in their careers. With any new team it is helpful to set a standard not just in your behaviour but in the way you manage the team and from what you expect. Remember, you are surrounded in a host of helpful information from the company's values, policies and job specific competencies all these must be used as a guide in standard setting and as the organisation of how you will do things. Of course you will also get guidance from your line manager, past experiences, training, other managers and your HR business partner. Additional standards can then be filtered in overtime after your initial meetings with the team in one to ones or group meetings.



Lastly you must never forget to always use discretion and consistency. When managing situations or behaviour it is between you and your staff member (unless you are seeking professional advice) and when you are consistent across the team, respect will follow. Once you have mastered these skills (and you will) all you need to do is enjoy and watch your garden grow.