

Don't ruin your best tech with a promotion

John has been with you for several years. He's a great service technician and seems to enjoy what he does. He doesn't complain and is always willing to help when you need something extra. You've been considering promoting him to service manager - after all, who could manage the department better than your best tech, right?

I've seen it dozens of times. A company promotes their best service technician to Service Manager only to see that he is no longer any good. I have seen it compared to sports figures that negotiate a new, big contract only to be a disappointment once they got the money. I know, the money is nowhere close to professional sports figures, but the situation is somewhat similar.

Let's take a look at the skills, values and behaviors needed to be a great service manager, and then I want to come back to this point. There is likely a very good reason they don't perform well in their new role.

What Soft Skills are Needed to be a Great Service Manager?

There are seven skills that your service tech must possess in order to be a great service manager.

Personal Accountability - This trait is a must for any position of responsibility. A great service manager will:

- Accept personal responsibility for the consequences of their personal actions
- Avoid placing unnecessary blame on others
- Maintain a personal commitment to objectives regardless of the success or failure of personal decisions
- Apply personal lessons learned from past failures to moving forward in achieving future successes.

Self Management - This is the ability to prioritize and complete tasks in order to deliver desired outcomes within allotted time frames. A person with the right stuff to be a great service manager will:

- Independently pursue business objectives in an organized and efficient manner.
- Prioritize activities as necessary to meet job responsibilities.
- Maintain the required level of activity toward achieving goals without direct supervision.
- Minimize work flow disruptions and time wasters to complete high quality work within the time frame required.

Results Oriented - Having the ability to identify actions necessary to complete tasks and obtain results is vital. With this, a great Service Manager will:

- Maintain a proper focus on goals.
- Identify and remove potential obstacles that get in the way of achieving those goals.
- Implement thorough and effective plans and apply the resources needed to get things done.
- Follow through on commitments.

Resiliency - Setbacks are inevitable, and resiliency is the ability to quickly recover from adversity. A resilient service manager will:

- Keep working toward goals even when things get tough.
- Handle criticism and rejection from others without objectivity.
- Recover quickly from personal setbacks.
- Move past unforeseen obstacles without unnecessary delay.

Goal Achievement – This is the overall ability to set, pursue and attain achievable goals, regardless of obstacles or circumstances. This person needs to be able to:

- Establish goals that are relevant, realistic and attainable.
- Identify and implements plans and milestones to achieve specific business goals. This also means they need to know what those business plans are.
- Initiate activity toward goals without unnecessary delay.
- Stay on target to complete goals regardless of obstacles or adverse circumstances.

Influencing Others – This person is the leader of the department. They can't do it all themselves and must get things done through other people. They must:

- Have the ability to personally affect others' actions, decisions, opinions or thinking.
- Effectively impact others' actions.
- Gain commitment from the service techs and other co workers in order to achieve desired results.
- Analyze the opinions of the people they are working with and lead them to understand and willingly accept desired alternatives.
- Persuade others in a positive manner.

Leading Others – They must have the ability to organize and motivate people to accomplish goals while creating a sense of order and direction. To do this, they must:

- Inspire the service techs with a compelling vision. This also means that, as the business owner, you must have a compelling vision. If you don't provide one, the vision will be theirs, not yours.
- Empower others to accomplish common goals.
- Be a positive, motivational example for others to emulate in becoming leaders themselves.
- Support those around him/her by providing clarity, direction, organization and purpose.

What Motivators are Needed to be a Great Service Manager?

There are different things that motivate different people. If you match a person to a job that rewards their personal motivators, they will excel. The position of service manager will reward those people who are motivated by different areas, such as utilitarian (rewarding practical accomplishments and rewards the investment of time, resources and energy) and theoretical (rewarding the opportunity to learn and professional development.)

What Soft Skills are Needed to be a Great Service Manager?

There are "soft" skills and related behaviours that your service tech must possess in order to be a great service manager.

- *Customer Oriented* - The job demands a positive and constructive view of working with others. There will be a high percentage of time spent in listening to, understanding and successfully working with a wide range of people from diverse backgrounds to achieve "win-win" outcomes.
- *Frequent Interaction with Others* - The job requires a strong "people orientation," versus a task orientation. The job will comfortably deal with multiple interruptions on a continual basis, always maintaining a friendly interface with others.
- *Versatility* - The job calls for a high level of optimism and a "can do" orientation. It will require multiple talents and a willingness to adapt them to changing assignments as required.

Don't Ruin a Good Tech By Promoting Him.

Some of these traits are the same, but some critical areas don't show up for a service tech. The thing that makes John, our service tech at the beginning of this article, a great service tech may very well make him a lousy service manager; and once you've promoted him, rarely can you go back. You either have to live with a lousy service manager or you end up parting ways with the guy. If John looks at it realistically, he may know he won't like the job. A great service tech enjoys working by themselves, whereas a service manager can't work by themselves. If they try, they will fail.

By Bill Kinnard