

The Importance of Being Consistent

By Dave Ashman

Front line managers must have a sixth sense, a special skill for identifying and isolating what the real story is in any situation. Supervising work crews gives front line supervisors an education equal to an advanced degree in human nature. The key to success is the ability to sort through the red herrings and find the true issue. Ask most front line supervisors, and they will tell you the decisions that most often return to haunt them come from trying to do someone a favor or trying to bend the rules just a bit.

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

A supervisor was asked by one of his employees if he could work out a deal to change the work schedule. A "family matter" required some additional attention around the house for a short period of time. The supervisor knew the individual and his family, so the request seemed reasonable.

When the time had come for the next schedule rotation to go into effect, the changes were made. Once the schedule was posted, the rest of the crew got together to express their concerns. As you can imagine, not one person thought the changes were fair, and they complained of favoritism, whether real or imagined. A simple



request ignited a feud within the ranks.

The supervisor pulled the crew together and initiated a dialog in hopes of working out this issue. At the meeting, the conversation and its results were fairly predictable. Everybody jumped on the employee who requested a change. The justifications for the unrest were all different, but shared a common complaint: "Why can't I . . . ?" The supervisor was on the defensive and back-pedaling furiously. He overturned the previous decision to change the schedule, and the feud ended. Instead of having multiple people angry, the supervisor now had only one.

Once you become a supervisor,

you have to accept three absolute truths about dealing with the crews you manage.

First, just because somebody is angry, it doesn't necessarily mean it is your problem. As long as you are being consistent and fair in your treatment of the people in your crews, this may not be your problem to solve.

Second, compassion is a matter of perspective. People have a short memory about when you helped them in a crisis. Everyone has a crisis at some point. Just like any other situation, define your limits and be consistent in the application. Never go outside the rules of the organization.

Third, remember who is the leader of the group. More than anything else, people want to know their leaders are honest and ethical. Hold the crew accountable for what they say and do, just as they hold you accountable for the same.

If you have a story or anecdote you would like to share, call (562) 425-2449, or write it down (include your name and phone number) and mail it to Ashman & Associates, 3164 North Greenbrier Road, Long Beach, CA 90808.