

THE MANAGEMENT BALANCING ACT

No doubt about it, being a manager of people is like walking a tightrope. Balancing the best interests of employees and the company can be a difficult challenge, even on good days. As a manager, your first obligation is to the employer whose name is on your paycheck; however, that employer has placed you in a position to safeguard employee interests, too. As many of us have learned the hard way, being a good manager is not tantamount to winning a popularity contest. Rather, establishing credibility and earning the respect of those you manage are important keys to the success of an effective manager.

With the constant demands on our time and the pressure to do more with less, we sometimes fail to examine the impact of our decisions, both in the near future and longer term. Furthermore, there are often no easy answers to the issues we face, and the most ethical decision usually isn't the easiest decision - in the short run, anyway.

All of us have biases and stereotypes of one sort or another that can affect our perception of any given situation. In addition, the more successful we become, the greater are the temptations to compromise our integrity. I encourage you to take a step back and examine your personal decision making process. In his book "Seeds of Greatness", author Denis Waitley has developed what he calls the Integrity Triangle. It consists of three basic questions that we should ask ourselves about any decision we make:

Is this true?

Is this what I believe I should do?

Is what I say consistent with what I do?

As Waitley says, to succeed we must think the truth, act the truth, and speak the truth. As managers, we must not underestimate the impact of our decisions on other people. Perhaps we should add the following questions to Waitley's Triangle:

Is this decision consistent with how I have handled similar situations in the past? If not, how and why does this particular situation merit a change?

What will the impact of this decision be on the people of the organization?

What impact will this decision have on the organization itself?

No wise person ever said managing people was easy. Effective managers establish a give and take relationship with their staff, and they accept the fact that we don't operate in a "black and white" world. Effective managers learn to deal with the "gray". Keeping this balancing act known as management operating smoothly takes practice, as well as vigilant examination of all sides of every issue.