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## A Short Course in Human Relations

Posted By *Peter Barron Stark* On December 16, 2009 @ 2:05 pm In Leadership | [1 Comment](#)

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### Simple Words Make a Significant Difference in Developing Leadership

The most important six words: "*I admit I made a mistake,*"

The most important five words: "*You did a good job,*"

The most important four words: "*What is your opinion?*"

The most important three words: "*Would you please...*"

The most important two words: "*Thank you,*"

The most important word: "*We,*"

The least important word: "*I.*"

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#### I Admit I Made a Mistake

Whenever supervisors and managers are able to admit they made a mistake, they have demonstrated two important leadership skills. First, [high self-esteem and confidence](#) <sup>[1]</sup>.

A supervisor or manager who lacks self-esteem and confidence will most likely defend wrong actions at all costs. Second, the need for [growth](#) <sup>[2]</sup>. Supervisors and managers who can admit they have made a mistake will most likely have followers who will go out of their way to help correct their leader's shortcomings.

#### You Did a Good Job

Supervisors and managers usually find that the only time they have to give employees feedback occurs when they are pointing something out that was done incorrectly and then they are calling it to the employee's attention. When things do go right, supervisors and managers find it hard to give others positive feedback. Recently, we heard a manager ask, "Why should I take the time to give all this positive feedback, when that's the job they were hired to do?" The reality is, though, that employees have a deep-seated need to know that they are doing a great job. In our work with organizations, the most consistent complaint we hear from employees is that their contributions are not valued.

#### What is Your Opinion?

Asking employees for their opinions and/or ideas is one of the most powerful ways you can tell them, "I value what you think." Often, employees have innovative solutions to problems, but lack the confidence to make suggestions. A confident supervisor will ask employees for their input and then make an effort to put employees' opinions and/or ideas into action.

#### Would You Please...

Asking, instead of telling, will achieve a better outcome in most interactions with people. When you tell employees without first gaining their input and support, you use the "toilet plunger" theory of management. If you have ever used a toilet plunger, then you know that as you give the plunger a real good push, "stuff" shoots back at you! The same principle can be applied to supervisors and managers who tell instead of ask...nasty stuff may spit back at them.

#### Thank You

Using these two simple words, *thank you*, acknowledges a person's contributions or gifts. All of us like to be thanked for what we do. Supervisors and managers who make a habit of acknowledging their employees' contributions build rapport, leading to stronger relationships. To be meaningful, *thank you*'s need to be specific, sincere, and genuine.

**We**

Managers and supervisors who are in the habit of saying “we” instead of “I” [3] usually have a supportive team lined up behind them. Leaders who ask employees to share their opinions and provide input into the decision-making process actually strengthen their position of leadership. Most importantly, leaders who “share the glory” and accept thanks on behalf of their team, not personally, increase the morale and commitment of their team.

**I**

No doubt about it...“I” have one tough job as a supervisor or manager facing today’s challenges in the workplace! Using the tips provided above, and remembering that “I” is the least important word, will increase your effectiveness as a supervisor and will build rapport and trust with your employees.

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URLs in this post:

[1] high self-esteem and confidence: <https://peterstark.com/leadership-edge>

[2] growth: <https://peterstark.com/twelve-step-recovery>

[3] “we” instead of “I”: [https://peterstark.com/i\\_vs\\_we](https://peterstark.com/i_vs_we)

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