

ONE KEY TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

by Dr. Tom Dukes

No one understands the importance of resilience more than managers who are trying to be successful in the current business environment.

Our complex agri-food system is dynamic and ever changing. Managers and the teams they lead have to be able to positively adapt to change and adversity. Decades of research in adversity tells us a lot about what people need in order to be more resilient and able to face the adversity they encounter on a daily basis.

One of the key elements of effective management is the ability of managers to develop the employees who report to them — beyond just coaching. While coaching is transactional and skills-focused, development is strategic, long-term and dedicated to cultivating the internal and external assets that promote resilience. Developing employees has to do with enhancing their professional function and helping them be more productive more quickly.

Development is based in the relationship between the manager and the employee.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIP

This developmental relationship is characterized by regular interactions, a collaborative approach, and reflective practice. This idea of reflective practice is important. By taking the time to reflect upon goals, interactions, feedback, and outcomes, successful managers are able to raise awareness, facilitate insight, increase emotional intelligence, improve critical thinking skills, and expand options for effectiveness. These increased capacities allow them to be more intentional in how they interact with their direct reports.

These important benefits accrue not only for the manager, but also the employee. The developmental

relationship serves as a model for how to build and sustain a relational context in which positive change and growth can occur. In this way, the developmental relationship between the manager and the employee parallels the relationship between the employee and their customers. The developmental manager can impact not only what the employee knows and does, but also who they are and how they use themselves as instruments of change in their relationships with customers.

As a manager takes on the various roles and activities of coaching, teaching, consulting, and counseling, their ultimate goals are to expand the capacity and effectiveness of the employee and monitor the quality of services provided to the customer.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF DEVELOPMENT

So, what can a manager do to create developmental relationships with those they supervise? There are five key evidence-based actions that provide the necessary components.

- 1. Express care.** People like to know that they are more than a number and that you are genuinely interested in them. In order to clear the way for growth, you need to minimize defensiveness. This is a great way to do that.
- 2. Challenge growth.** People do their best when they have high expectations placed on them and they are inspired to stretch and do more than they thought possible.
- 3. Provide support.** The combination of high expectations and high levels of support creates a culture of high performance.



4. Share power. By communicating respect and giving employees a voice as true collaborators, managers can encourage a sense of ownership and personal investment in organizational goals and outcomes.

5. Expand possibilities. Developmental managers help their direct reports explore options, connect and network, and envision a fulfilling professional career.

By incorporating knowledge and insights that come from the study of resilience, we are able to provide concrete strategies and tools that we know support the development of key internal assets and external supports contributing to a culture in which individuals can thrive in spite of the inevitable difficulties they will face. **AM**

Dr. Tom Dukes is the director of quality at Community Ventures in Living and former associate professor of counseling at Rhode Island College. He teaches in two programs for Purdue's Center for Food and Agricultural Business – Cultivating Resilience and Sales Management and Leadership. He can be reached at tdukes@ric.edu.

