Importance of Managers Is Overestimated

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Stop wasting money on expensive training courses for managers — send the entire team instead! This produces better results, says Johan Bertlett, who recently defended a PhD thesis in psychology at Lund University, Sweden.

A good working climate is not only a requirement for job satisfaction. It is also an important success factor for a profit-driven company. Almost 200 employees at Arlanda Airport in Stockholm were included in Johan Bertlett's study, which shows that the manager is only able to influence the working climate to a limited extent. Instead, it is the interaction between the manager and the staff that is crucial.

"Of course you need a good manager if the interaction between the manager and the staff is to work," says Johan Bertlett. "But it is important to understand that the manager's situation is also influenced by the staff. Simply focusing on the manager means turning a blind eye to the contributions of the staff, and in doing so, you exclude a lot of the potential that exists within the company."

The best working climate is found at companies where the manager and the staff interact, and where the manager creates good conditions for the staff to manage themselves and each other.

"A good manager should train his or her staff, and encourage informal leadership by delegating to those who are willing to take greater responsibility," says Johan Bertlett.

In his view, there are many benefits of solving problems at the operational level: First and foremost, the communication and decision-making paths become shorter, and the managers can focus more on strategic management.

Many employees are happy to take on more responsibility, but not many are

prepared to do it if it is not reflected in their pay packet:

“It is not only a matter of the manager being able to delegate, it is also a matter of how much commitment the employee is willing to show. And the company management must also create the general conditions for this to work,” says Johan Bertlett.

Johan Bertlett hopes that his research will influence how management training is offered in the future: “The management of a company should think again before they send their team leaders on management training courses. It would probably be more beneficial to send an entire team instead.”

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