



8 Things Good Managers Do that Make Their Best People Leave.



Robert J Schout . President, PowerSkills Training & Development. 30 Jan 2025

Managers do so many things right every day. They lead, balance, manage, create cultures, answer, navigate and plan. They are available and hold volumes of information in their heads so that they can assess any situation in a moment's notice.

They can also do a few things that make their best and brightest head for the door. Then, wonder why people have departed and they are left with professionals who express limited initiative, enthusiasm and engagement. Or worse, they are left with people who actively retire-in-place or make it their mission to weave their own discontent into the daily fabric of workplace culture.

8 Things good managers do that make the best and brightest leave.

1. **They don't fix problems** that are brought to them or problems that perennially appear. Persistent problems create off shoot challenges and problems for people, processes, systems, partnerships, and projects. Their best people have to pick up the pieces of broken operations, wayward partnerships and fractured feelings. The best have to run interference for managers and teams and put their reputations on the line. They have to pick up extra loads. The best and brightest lose respect for leaders. They get tired of notifying leaders of the problems, consequences and even solutions that could be implemented. They just give up. Disappointed, they eventually depart.
2. **They avoid dealing with the bad behaviors from a few employees.** Avoidant management styles and conflict avoidance techniques allow bad behaviors to toxify workplace cultures. The

underlying current of a workplace climate becomes tense, heavy and on-edge. Morale drops every time bad behavior – be it aggressive, passive-aggressive, or merely hyperbolic – is allowed to express and go unchecked. Others have to absorb the emotional energy, verbal assaults or toxic droplets, drip by drip. People are sitting back wondering, screaming in their minds, *“Why are you (manager) not stopping this? Why are you not protecting the rest of us? We matter just as much or more than they do. We are the ones who are doing all the right things, and you are letting them get away with tearing us down.”* The best people suffer from the abuse, neglect and tension created by others. Eventually they lose faith in the half-hearted empty talk of a manager and realize that they have many other choices. They leave.

3. **They hold people to the minimal standards** to suit the lowest common denominators and the lowest performers instead of raising standards to levels that the highest performers strive for. Maintaining low standards and low expectations promotes and perpetuates mediocrity and negative peer pressure. When a high achiever volunteers repeatedly or takes initiative they can be ostracized. People can make fun of them in meetings or may, very directly, tell them not to take such actions because such actions ‘look bad’ for the rest of the group. Over time, minimal expectations and standards demoralize high performers. Their best people lose motivation, rewards have little meaning, and good employees get demoralized that slackers get by while others are putting in more effort. The best and brightest want to be around other people who strive for the best and who are very bright. They asked to be transferred or seek kindred spirits elsewhere.
4. **They succumb to the manipulation of others** in meetings and allow meeting and agendas to be pulled off track. Some managers want to accommodate so much, or they have misconstrued what servant leadership and collaboration really means for managers that they falsely believe that to institute any kind of boundary or limit or to stop any kind of input is an absolute no-no for managers. This, of course, is not true. A manager must be adept and confident with flexing all styles: business-orientation, collaboration, autocratic when needed, service-orientation, crisis management, etc. Some managers get stuck and allow themselves and their habit to be manipulated, thus entire team processes (e.g., meetings and agendas and decisions) are manipulated. The best and brightest people see this and lose respect for a manager. They see meetings as a waste of time when, in fact, they may have been looking forward to using meetings and decision-making processes for more productive purposes. Eventually they shut down, stop offering input, stop volunteering and ask for detail assignments. Soon they depart.
5. **They perpetuate overload and overwhelm** in their people and their themselves by not stopping, planning, realigning with core goals, visions or strategies. This results in constant crisis management and lurching from task to task. The best and brightest must then carry more stress and workload burdens. All because the manager does not know how to, is afraid to, or refuses to, manage upward to set boundaries or establish priorities, engage in strategic or transitional planning, engage in workload-workflow redistribution, etc. Their best people try to keep up and help out but eventually burnout. They leave for calmer more organized management cultures and workplaces.
6. **They don’t deal effectively with their own stress, burnout or pressures.** They over share. They vent inappropriately. They snap and then repeatedly apologize. They lack self-awareness

and awareness of their impact on others. They use their best and brightest people as their therapists and vocational/emotional support systems. They have the power to simply have people listen to them in meetings, in hallways, and online and they inherently, unconsciously use it. The best and brightest people are incredibly emotionally intelligent. They have tons of empathy, understanding, compassion and kindness. They will listen, understand and try to lessen the load of leaders but if the leader does not fundamentally change, nothing will change. It is never the responsibility of an employee to be a manager's emotional support person. It sets up a role reversal dynamic. The best and brightest people eventually will grow physically, mentally, and emotionally tired of listening. They know that it is not their job. They know it is inappropriate. They know that a line is, or may be, crossed. They will begin to avoid or smile but not respond. In the long run the best and brightest will not want to stay around depressed demoralized leaders. They will leave to save themselves: to save their sanity and morale.

7. **They reprimand everyone for the actions of a few.** At times, managers default to a one-size fits all response. A one-size fits all response is perfectly appropriate with a law, statute, or regulation must be enforced. However, in response to individualized behaviors, a universal response is viewed as blatantly unfair, especially to professionals who engage in consistently high-standard practices. Managers use a one-size fits all response to reprimand all for the actions of a few for a few reasons: a) they are afraid of being accused of being unfair, b) because of frustration, c) because they lack knowledge or skill in administering corrective action, d) they over-react and want to stamp-down a behavior and make a point that something will not be tolerated, e) they want to make a universal rule so they don't have to deal with variations on a theme when other behaviors pop up. So, they slap everyone for the actions of one or a few. The best people recoil from correction and constraint. They know the correction is not deserved or justified. When this repeatedly occurs, the best and brightest will depart.
8. **They neglect their best and brightest.** Managers sometimes assume that the best and brightest people will always be hang around. They will always be able to be depended upon the best and brightest to carry the heavier loads, do what others refuse to do, fall in line, tolerate what should be intolerable. Managers make lots of misguided assumptions. They don't offer unique training or support opportunities to their best and brightest, though they depend on them to do more work or perform without any guidance. They don't offer individualize moral support. The best people do not get their needs met. They feel used and neglected over time. They feel taken advantage of or simply forgotten. They know that in other venues they will shine, receive recognition, opportunities, development and support. They head for the door.

Robert Schout is President of PowerSkills Training & Development Inc. and Schout It Out LLC. His companies provide training, consulting and coaching to hundreds of businesses and government agencies each year. Robert is soon-to-be the author of (2) books for business professionals: Performance Management@Work and Leading and Managing Up@Work. See preview chapters and get more information about our leadership seminars such as:

At www.powerskillsinternational.com. Robert is also the author of (2) poetry books and (4) illustrated children's books. More information can be found at www.schoutitout.com