



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

# The Stepping Stone

July 2008 – Issue No. 31



# Make the Most of Your Promotion

by Kevin Leavey

**C**ongratulations! You've just been promoted to manager, now what do you do?

The occasion of being promoted to manager is always a pride-filled moment. You've earned this recognition by achieving a professional milestone or the confidence of senior management that you're the right person for the job. As you bask in the warmth of this good feeling, a bit of trepidation usually starts to seep in. Part of you is thinking, "I've only had to worry about myself in the past ... now what do I do?"

I have been managing people for over a decade. Over this time I have learned a great deal about how to bring a team together to meet company goals. A consistent source of pride for me is the feedback I've received that I am a good manager; people like working for me, and my teams have been well respected. I offer the following tips to help you start pulling together your own team.

## 1. Learn the basics.

There are certain administrative items you'll be expected to know as a manager. Familiarize yourself with company policies regarding: scheduling, recording and approving vacation and work time; how to submit salary increases for exams, merit, and promotions; when to complete and deliver formal performance management; who to contact for systems concerns; and how to complete and submit expense reimbursement. These processes may seem mundane, but they are crucial to a smooth-running organization. Your staff expects you to be able to do these things, and to do them right. Introduce yourself to your department/division HR specialist; they'll be an invaluable resource to you.

## 2. Be an advocate for your people and your company.

One of the best pieces of advice I received as a new manager was to remove any barriers that prevented my employees from completing their assigned tasks. Make sure they have all the tools needed to complete the job. Let them know they have your support, in words and deeds. Also, bring their thoughts and concerns to senior management. Knowing you "have their back" allows your team to focus on doing their job.

## 3. Be an advocate for your company.

You are now the first link in the chain to senior management; take this responsibility seriously. Know the company's strategy and how your group fits within the strategy. Articulate and reinforce this throughout the year.

## 4. Maintain the proper perspective.

You will need to transition your outlook from individual to supervisor. You are no longer just an individual contributor. You will need to learn to delegate. Do not assume this will be easy, and be patient. No one will do a task exactly the same way you would, and their first attempt will not go as well as you could do it now. Let them learn—your first attempt probably didn't win any awards either!

## 5. Maintain the appropriate relationships.

You are the boss. Everyone wants to be liked, and you should maintain a cordial and professional relationship with your staff. However, you are not expected to be their best friend. You will be put in a position where you need to push your people at times for them to reach their highest potential. Do not let your desire



Kevin Leavey, FSA, CFA, MAAA, is AVP, Annuities Product Development at Sun Life of Canada (U.S.). He can be reached at [kevin.leavey@sunlife.com](mailto:kevin.leavey@sunlife.com).

to be liked influence your ability to push your team when needed.

**6. Always strive to improve.**

Take advantage of available resources. Many companies provide manager training. Companies are striving to make the training easier by offering webcasts and other online media to deliver the training. You can also look to management books and *The Stepping Stone* for assistance. Encourage your team to let you know how you're doing. Let them know that their feedback is important to you, and you will take their comments seriously. That does not mean you have to automatically correct all critiques, but that you will listen carefully, evaluate their input, and endeavor to improve in the future.

**7. Finally, don't assume you're ever truly "done".**

This point was driven home for me a few years back in a rather unexpected way. I had begun a class to become a certified soccer referee. When the instructor asked the participants why they were there, most said "I want to be a referee". He actually laughed. Then he said, "Okay folks, listen up. When you complete this course and pass the test, I will give you a patch to wear that allows you to go out onto the field and potentially embarrass yourself. You will not be a referee. Come back to me after you've done 100 games and then I'll call you a referee." Ignoring the fact that he needs some help in motivating people, his point was well-taken. Learning the skills and tips I laid out above will not make you a good manager. Applying them over time and developing the ability to adapt your methods and style to the people who work for you is what will make you a good manager, maybe even a great one.

So learn the basics, be an advocate for your people and your company, maintain the proper perspective and relationships, and always strive to improve.

Congratulations, you've earned your promotion! □

---

**You will be put in a position where you need to push your people at times for them to reach their highest potential. Do not let your desire to be liked influence your ability to push your team when needed.**

---

