



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – December 2003

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Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at www.mergespeaks.com or 403-605-4756

One size doesn't fit all!

Before Mary Kay Ash founded Mary Kay Cosmetics in the early sixties, she worked as a salesperson for Stanley Home Products, and she recalls that she won a prize in an internal sales contest. While she appreciated the recognition, she was not entirely thrilled with her prize. "It was a flounder light. Something you're supposed to pin on your hip boots when you fish at night!" She remembers, "I was devastated. What a terrible thing to give any woman. You can tell it was a man who was awarding those prizes."

While this faux pas may have occurred over fifty years ago, its message is still timely to leaders and managers today. Basic motivational theory says that employees do what they see is rewarded, and what motivates one employee may not necessarily be a motivator for the next. Successful leaders and managers know there is no such thing as "one size fits all" when it comes to recognizing, rewarding and motivating employees. It is critical to understand employees individually, and to tailor the reward to fit the employee. In Mary Kay's case, not only was the flounder light not a motivator, it actually became a de-motivator!

Take the time to understand what drives each of your employees (and in some cases, your co-workers). Some people thrive on public recognition, others value private acknowledgement. If you are going to offer a small token of your appreciation, don't give tickets for a baseball game to someone who would prefer to attend the opera. Yet others see greater responsibility as reward, while some need no recognition whatsoever. Remember, tailor your rewards to fit your employees.