

***They are watching you***

By Paperitalo Staff

Do you have trouble getting subordinates to do what you want them to do? There can be many reasons for this, but one of the most common is that YOU are not doing what you want THEM to do.

A couple of months back, I telephoned a certain company, a small supplier to the industry, about 9:00 in the morning. A pleasant woman answered the phone. "I would like to speak to John Henry (not his real name)," I said, whom I knew to be the owner. She responded that he was not in.

"Can you tell me when you expect him?"

Pleasant woman turned icy: "He's the owner; he comes and goes as he pleases and answers to no one."

Wow! Did I hit a sore button!

The truth is, owner or not, your subordinates are watching your every move and mimicking your every action, if and when they can get by with it.

I worked in a mill one time where a manager, about 10:00 a.m. every morning, slipped off with a couple of the regular on-site contractors who bought him coffee and pie at the local eatery. His subordinates derisively called it "pie time." He was usually gone for about an hour, and then, oops, it's time for lunch! But just let him catch one of his direct reports goofing off. Ultimately, his direct reports got him removed from his position for an unrelated reason (he came very close to being fired), and I am sure he never really saw the deep-seated cause of their disloyalty.

Want a clean mill? Clean up your own office first. Want more timely attendance? Make sure you beat the start time and stay beyond the quitting time established.

Yes, despite your words, your actions will lead and there is nothing you can do about this. You must be superior in behavior to whatever behavior standards you want from your subordinates. I hate to tell you, but becoming manager did not make things easier, did not bring you a cushier life-style, even if you are the owner and were just appointed top dog by mommy or daddy.

One of my favorite colleagues leads his company with great gusto. And although he may not quite make it to work as early as they do, he is often there later than they are. And, they do cut him a little slack; after all, he is 86 years old. He is on an airplane off to visit clients nearly every week. Now, there is an example!

The best place to lead by example, of course, is safety. You cannot expect anyone who works for you to operate with better safety habits than your own.

A special thank you: Fred Keller, a reader from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, touched up the picture at the top of the column. He succeeded in turning me from orange to blue. Thanks, Fred!

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##