

## New Manager on Board

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We recently hired a new manager. Our cost of good sold was too high, and employees were not getting things under control. Now the employees are rebelling - going behind the new manager's back, telling me she's causing problems, trying to stir things up. What should we do?

You were right to get a manager on board who could put controls in place. Spending hard earned money unnecessarily because employees won't work with you to lower costs is not right. Let spending continue out of control and you could eventually jeopardize more than your profits - you could put the whole business at risk.

Now you'll have to deal with the transition. Change can be tough on everyone. The person imposing the changes is often seen as part of the problem. You'll have to stick up for your manager to get everyone to go through the transition.

You're walking a fine line between encouraging people to work together and warning them that rebellion won't be tolerated. It would be great if everyone simply stepped up and accepted the new manager. What you do in the next few weeks will go a long way to setting the tone in the future.

People often look to avoid making changes until they are forced to do so. People are creatures of habit. Once habits are built it can be difficult to alter them. It takes a firm, steady, constant approach to make change happen.

In this case, I happen to know there's also an employee who thought he should have been the one to get the manager's job. Unfortunately, this employee is part of the problem of overspending. Even after several meetings to discuss the need for budgeting and controlling costs, this employee did not seem able to reduce spending. Each failure to reduce costs was met with excuses rather than plans.

The existing employee spent more time blaming others than he did trying to fix things. Now that he's confronted with a new manager, it's a pretty good bet he's going to act out and try to cause problems. He is used to blaming, and avoiding the core issues - he'll probably continue to do so as he is asked to deal with his new manager.

Be careful that the employee who thought he should have been the manager doesn't become a ring leader for poor behavior. He'll look for support wherever he can get it. That probably means he'll try to enlist other employees he's worked with in attempts to get around the new manager.

Your best bet is to have a general meeting, to address how things are going with the new manager. Make sure that you're clear as to why the manager was hired, and that you expect total support for the actions the new manager is taking. Answer any questions about the new manager honestly and directly.

As a follow up to the general meeting, you may want to meet with employees one on one. Do not allow these meetings to become complaint sessions. Instead ask employees to support the new manager and re-state that you expect they will be giving the new manager their complete cooperation.

Meet with the employee who thought he should have gotten the manager's job. Tell him that he is expected to be on his best performance. Explain that his best chance to get ahead is to provide the new manager with his complete cooperation and support. Make it clear you will not tolerate any rebellion on his part, nor will you accept his trying to rally other people to his cause. Point out that if he thinks he cannot work for the new manager, he does have options, they just may not include working for your company in the future.

Whatever you do, do not encourage employees to come to you if they have questions or concerns. You want them going to the new manager and learning to deal directly for all of their needs. If people do come to you, don't try to solve their problems. Simply remind them they have a new manager and refer them back to that person.

Remember, you hired this new manager to do a job. Get out of the way and let her do it. Back her completely and guide her as she learns the business. Monitor how things are going from a distance. Put benchmarks in place, so you and she both know what she's shooting to accomplish, by when.

Looking for a good book? Try *What To Do When You Become The Boss: How New Managers Become Successful Managers*, by Bob Selden.

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