

Managerial Skills

SEMI's Business Management Module

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Tool #32 – HABITS OF STRONG SEED COMPANY MANAGERS

Running a good seed company does not depend on doing a few things well – *it depends on doing a lot of things well!*

Occasionally reviewing this checklist will help you focus on the most important things you need to be doing as a senior manager.

Tool #32 – HABITS OF STRONG SEED COMPANY MANAGERS

1. Always pay attention to seed quality! No exceptions, no shortcuts. Poor-quality seed will cost you money and will cause your customers to make lower yield.

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Seed Quality

- Seed is not grain!!!!
- I have seen:
 - Trucks driving on seed
 - Harsh threshing methods
 - Shelling that kills 20% of the seed
 - Seed being cooked
 - Seed being ruined in storage – moisture, weevils, heat, age
 - Seed is a fragile, living thing! Grain is not.

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2. **Constantly look at your business through the eyes of your customers—the farmers.** This should include looking at purchasing convenience, pricing, packaging, and your educational approach, from their perspective.



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3. **Set clear, attainable goals for your team.**

Goals are important for your team to understand and accept. Make sure that each member of the team understands how their actions will contribute to accomplishing the goal.

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4. Plan ahead! Do not run your business day to day, week to week, or month to month.

Despite the many small crises that will inevitably arise each week, good managers plan ahead and keep the team focused on accomplishing the plan.

Planning Exercise

You are making a decision about 20 ha of outgrower hybrid maize seed production. You do not have enough money to help the outgrower purchase fertilizer. So the outgrower uses only half the recommended amount. Instead of making 3 t/ha, the outgrower makes only 2.3 t/ha. What is your opportunity cost of not making sure that all of the fertilizer is applied?

Opportunity Cost

The cost of the opportunity that you are missing!

In this case, how much revenue are you missing?

What is your opportunity cost here?

- 20 ha with 2.3 t/ha yield instead of 3 t/ha yield
- Hybrid maize sells for \$2 USD/kg

This is due to lack of *planning!*

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5. Communicate regularly with your team about successes, challenges, and changes.

The importance of communicating with your team cannot be overstated. Regular team meetings are excellent communication vehicles and provide good opportunities for all team members to exchange views and information and ask questions.

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6. Stay calm, especially when there are problems. Leadership is an important responsibility, and clear thinking in the midst of a challenge is critical.

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7. Create an atmosphere of open debate; do not discourage your team from voicing independent opinions about what is best for the company and your customers. You will miss out on excellent ideas and creative thinking if you create an atmosphere where your team is afraid to voice their own opinions.

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8. Show extra appreciation to your team members when they do a good job. Recognition is a powerful motivator. Regularly look for opportunities to recognize your employees for doing things *right*! Often, it is the small, unexpected rewards that are the most meaningful.



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9. Hire people based on skills and merit, not based on connections. Your entire team will work harder and be more confident about the future of the company if they recognize that you are building the company around strong performers, not around personal connections and preferences.

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10. “Manage by walking around,” often referred to as **MBWA**. The best managers are close to the activities of the company, observe work personally, and understand first-hand the challenges and successes of the company. It is very hard to build this knowledge from your office or your car. You need to interact informally with your team—observing and coaching them—as they are working.

Good MBWA – 6 steps

1. Identify what people are doing RIGHT!
2. Identify areas for improvement
3. Ask them for their ideas for improvement
4. Explain WHY the improvement is good for the company and good for them
5. Thank them for their good ideas, and for the work you know they will be doing
6. Ask them to communicate back to you about the improvement

Thank you

Asante Sana

Merci Beaucoup

Obrigado