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Brazil

Effective Leadership Styles

Preferred leadership characteristics & styles

Hierarchical and paternalistic. Organizational structures in Brazil are generally [hierarchical](#) in nature. Managers tend to have a fairly paternalistic relationship with their employees, and likewise, Brazilian subordinates often expect an authoritative rather than an egalitarian relationship with their supervisors.

Professional and personal. However, paternalistic management relationships do not depend on authority and direction alone; effective managers in Brazil also demonstrate a sincere interest in the views of their employees as well as the difficulties they face both in their professional and their personal lives.

In many cases, managers and workers will have close relationships with immediate and extended family members, which may include as many as a hundred people. Work is often prioritized below family needs and obligations. Employees expect a certain amount of support and guidance from their manager, including flexibility and understanding when [family](#) issues arise. To be successful in Brazil, a manager needs to be sensitive to family obligations and prepared to offer assistance in this area when needed.

Loyalty to a manager. Although employees may feel a great deal of loyalty toward their manager, particularly as a paternalistic figure, this loyalty may not extend to the job or to the company as a whole.

Potential pitfalls

Building paternalistic relationships with Brazilian subordinates can present significant challenges for foreign managers. These relationships require substantial insight into Brazilian culture and the nature of family relationships there, are based on trust, and may take a long time to form.

Importance of face. Personal pride and a desire to save face may also interfere with the effective management of

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subordinates. In the absence of a trusting relationship with supervisors, Brazilian employees may hesitate to admit mistakes or ask questions when they do not understand instructions. Conducting business in a language other than Portuguese only adds to this problem.

Fear of failure and loss of face may also lead to risk-averse behaviors among many Brazilian employees. It may be difficult for a foreign manager to encourage employees to take on extra responsibilities before a sense of trust and security has been established.

Strategies

- Becoming a successful manager in Brazil may take a significant period of time, as substantial insight into Brazilian culture and family relationships is required.
- Brazilian subordinates often expect a somewhat authoritarian rather than an egalitarian relationship with their supervisors.
- Effective managers in Brazil demonstrate a sincere interest in the views of their employees and in their professional and personal lives.
- A manager needs to be sensitive to employees' family obligations and be prepared to offer assistance when needed.
- Give feedback in a private location, behind closed doors.
- Watch out for situations in which an employee does not fully understand your instructions despite verbal reassurances that he or she does.
- When introducing new tasks or procedures, be sure to both explain and demonstrate your expectations.
- Allow time for the employee to explain and demonstrate the procedures back to you.
- It may be effective to set up a reward system for those employees who take on extra responsibility or risks.
- Employees will need to be assured that they will not be punished for making honest mistakes.
- Checking in regularly and asking for progress reports will also encourage employees and ensure that you are getting accurate information.