Heavy is the head

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What characteristics make for a good line manager?

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Ultimately the only thing any leader can hope to achieve, is the ongoing inspiration of their team and its constituent members.
This can be achieved in several ways but generally speaking the most effective policy is one which adheres to the following tenets:

Leaders *HR*

1. Equality
Any professional appreciates seeing their line manager(s) getting their hands dirty with tasks which appear to be beneath their status.
It serves as a most powerful reminder that everybody is 'in it together'. When it is being carried out specifically to facilitate the needs of the team or the individual members,it has an even greater impact.

2. Capability
There is a school of 'management thought' that prefers to maintain the oppression of subordinates. However it doesn't take a quantitative analyst to see that this is not the most productive approach. Conversely, team leaders who focus on empowering their staff enjoy a far greater work throughput and experience higher levels of positivity exhibited by their team members. If the team believes that they are just rolling with the punches, then they will never take any pride in their work.

3. Unity
Workers who fear letting their immediate team down represent much greater value in terms of capability than those who are primarily concerned with their own personal reputation within the organisations political environ. A team consisting of self starters working as a cohesive unit, with shared goals and work ethos can usually handle anything percolating down from the management upstream. It should be noted that there can be hidden drawbacks resulting from an over emphasis on team unity. Resilient and confident teams can potentially represent a barrier to any form of external assessment.

4. Empathy
The most critical question for any line manager engaged in HRM should be "What expectations would I have, in their position?".
There's a finite value in approaching management from an entirely subjective perspective. Conversely, approaching HR issues having adopted an objective mindset, will invariably produce more optimal outcomes.

5. Transparency
Assuming that confidentiality within the management supply chain equates directly to perception management among subordinates, is a profound mistake. Even with extensive psychometric profiling, it is extremely unlikely that any employer will have an exhaustive understanding of what makes every single one of their employees tick. The previous industry and or personal experiences of any employee, may have rendered them highly skeptical and not predisposed to the arbitrary acceptance of narratives handed down to them. Consequently, any hastily concocted ideologies or explanations are unlikely to foster trust in the team, the team leader, the department or even the organisation as a whole.

6. Demarcation
Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are equally important in SME's and Fortune100's. While many small businesses require flexibility on the part of their workers, there is a definite risk of overloading and alienating any employee, if they are expected to cover numerous divergent roles. Suddenly increasing an employees responsibility without any commensurate increase in remuneration / title etc. will logically lead to the employee feeling undervalued. It would be difficult to imagine how such an action could be perceived as anything other than shifting the goalposts (at best) or pulling the rug out from underneath them (at worst). Given that a high staff turnover is conventionally viewed as a negative, it is in the interest of any organisation and its team leaders, to ensure that their staff do not feel alienated at any point.