

IBM Manager Spotlight Podcast: Joann Ruvolo

(For IBM "Manager Hub" audiences.)

[My voiceover intro] Welcome to the Manager Spotlight podcast series, where IBM Software Group managers discuss best practices and tips for career and professional development for their employees.

Note: All text in italics below is actual audio of the person interviewed. The rest in non-italics is my added narration.

[Music Lead In – 10 seconds]

Joann Ruvolo, Information Management Manager, leads a geographically dispersed group of fifteen U.S. based employees. Joann believes that before any kind of professional development can happen, there must be a trusting relationship between a manager and an employee.

"The approach I take is one of serious investment in people. I spend a lot of time with my team. I pay attention to what they're doing. I think that helps build trust in the relationship. So when I do provide feedback to people, they take it in such a way that it's not criticism ... they know that I'm trying to help them be more effective."

Says Joann, only when trust is established, can employee learning and growth begin to happen.

"They absorb the feedback I give them and they really evolve."

Joann also notes that many times employees don't fully realize the value that they bring to an organization. She always tries to point out employees' skills and attributes that differentiate them from everyone else.

"I think the key to being a good manager is seeing the potential in people that they don't even see in themselves sometimes. Or if they do, help them to actualize that, help to put them in a position where they can grow."

Joann notes that it's especially useful with employees who may be nervous about taking risks with their career.

"I had an employee who was really very good at design, a relatively new employee, maybe two years with the company, but really hadn't demonstrated any leadership ability. So, a role came by to lead a particular product where we were trying to showcase the work that we do in the department. It was building a tool."

Joann convinced the employee to take on the challenge because the project depended on building exceptional design into the tool. She said that it would be a great opportunity to develop leadership skills in a practical way.

"So then she went off and took on this role, and it was a challenging role because there were some interesting team dynamics with a few members of the team. She did not necessarily have a lot of project management skills."

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Joann's coaching helped the employee take the risk, build her skills and successfully complete the assignment.

"At the end of the year, she told me, she said you know I really like your management style and I'm really happy that you put me in this leadership role because it's not something that I would have done myself."

"Often employees get so bogged down with their day job that they're not really good at stepping back and seeing the value that they add. I think that when they do that, they can feel more proud of what they do and get more confident. And it helps them to start asking for more."

This has been the Manager Spotlight. Thanks so much for listening. [Closing music – 10 seconds.]