

Keep It Simple  
By Pete Clark

When I was chosen to be a Division Three Manager in a big box department store, I inherited a tremendous crew. I had been the assistant manager in Domestics, whose nine departments made up Division Three, for some time, so I knew my way around back there. That experience helped me to ease into the job. I had five very capable people working for me. Unfortunately, they were prone to being called to the front registers when the store became busy and someone always had to be available to service the cutting table in the Piece Goods Department. Employees could become hard to find in that back corner of the building.

One of the other Division Managers informed me that I would probably be stuck with Billy, the teenage son of the Personnel Manager. He said she had sent him to both other divisions, but he and the other supervisor did not want the kid around. Billy was a nice kid with a learning disability. At that point, my workload was enormous, so I decided to worry about Billy when the time came.

A few days later, Billy showed up for work. I did not expect him to be there and had no plan for him. I took him to my large stock room upstairs and told him to get everything off the floor in the aisles and sweep the place out. Facing reality and not being not quite as closed minded as a lot of people, I figured out how to help Billy become a First-Class Employee, even if his abilities were limited in scope.

The next time Billy showed up for work, I took him back to Receiving and pointed out stacks of boxes containing yarn for the Knitting Department. I marked each box with a Magic Marker so he would not miss any of them when he moved the stock to the floor. When he finished moving the yarn, I gave him a box-cutter. Using my box-cutter, I showed him the proper way to open a shipping carton. Next, he learned how to put price tags the skeins of yarn and the lady responsible for the department taught him how to put them into the bins.

We went through these procedures for every department. Afterwards, the people responsible for the various areas gave him directions when they were needed. Billy's hard work became very valuable to me, as he often released my regular staff from the repetitive and time-consuming pricing of hundreds of small items.