



Managing for Success

Practical Advice for Managers

Steven R. Smith
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Rating

8 8 Applicability
7 Innovation
8 Style

Focus

Leadership & Management

Strategy
Sales & Marketing
Finance
Human Resources
IT, Production & Logistics
Career & Self-Development
Small Business
Economics & Politics
Industries
Global Business
Concepts & Trends

Take-Aways

- Most managers perform poorly because they lack proper management training.
- Many learn how to manage from their managers, who also lack formal training.
- Being an expert in your professional specialty does not make you a good manager.
- The most important managerial task is to hire the best people.
- A manager's success depends on the achievements of those he or she supervises.
- A sound manager delegates work and coaches the employees who do it.
- Treating employees with respect produces better results than micromanaging them.
- "Enrich" and improve each employee's job by making it more meaningful, challenging and autonomous.
- Job enrichment means redesigning a position's duties to make the job more responsible and more fulfilling.
- Seek your staffers' input before you make decisions that affect them.

Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this summary, you will learn: 1) Why most managers need more training; 2) What skills managers need to develop; and 3) How managers should relate to the employees they supervise, their bosses and their HR departments.

Review

Calling upon his more than four decades of management and executive experience in the pharmaceutical industry, Steven R. Smith presents a clear, intelligent, highly useful manual for all modern managers. Smith covers every area of responsibility – with a focus on hiring – and begins from a compelling position: Most managers who are promoted due to their skills and achievements in various areas of business performance are ill-prepared for management jobs and could benefit from any guidance they can get. Smith’s pragmatic – if mainstream – advice provides very concise basic management training while offering worthwhile insights into employee-manager and manager-boss relations. *getAbstract* recommends Smith’s unpretentious, valuable primer to managers who could use a refresher and to those who are mostly winging it for now.

Summary

“If you are...typical of today’s manager, chances are you are not as good as you think.”

“Don’t be afraid to acknowledge that you do not know what you should be doing as a manager, why you should be doing it or how to do it most effectively.”

Managers Need Training

Research indicates that 40% of first-time managers can’t do their jobs. Most of the remaining 60% lack basic managerial skills. Only a few new managers manage well. This endemic lack of management know-how manifests as a corporate problem in a variety of ways. Poor management cuts productivity, and bad managers fuel costly employee turnover. Employees who leave their jobs often do so because they dislike their managers.

Most new managers learn how to do their jobs from their old managers, who also don’t know what they’re doing. Bad practices persist and become entrenched. One problem is that excellent employees usually get promoted to management positions as a reward for good service. However, they advance without ever gaining management skills.

Being expert in a technical or professional field does not make you a good manager – but it can help you earn a promotion. What if the executive in charge of your operation assigned you to become your firm’s official pilot? You’d say, “I can’t fly a plane. I need training!” Flying part of a fast-moving company also requires training, even though companies often promote people into a pilot’s seat without even an overview of the field’s accepted expertise or “best practices.”

Key Concepts for Success

Managers should understand the Pareto principle. Also known as the 80/20 rule, this concept holds that “approximately 20% of causes explain about 80% of results” in most areas of your life. While this rule “is counterintuitive in a way,” most of your results are “the product of a small minority of inputs.” Focus your work time on the “vital few” concerns – the top 20% – that matter and worry less about the “trivial many” – the bottom 80%. Of course, you must correctly identify the vital few.

In the 1960s, Douglas McGregor identified two management theories in his book *The Human Side of Enterprise*. He found that Theory X executives are autocratic

“As a manager, you are judged on the success or failure of what your people do.”

“Poor communication between supervisor and employee is one of the biggest problems in the workplace and frequently causes major employee dissatisfaction.”

“Your relationship with your supervisor is vitally important to your success and survival within your company.”

“The idea that a manager cannot be friendly with...staff is a throwback to the old, autocratic, Theory X style of management.”

micromanagers who grant employees little autonomy, while Theory Y managers treat employees as responsible adults. Theory Y predominates today because it is more effective. Motivated, empowered employees are more productive and less likely to generate costly turnover. Managers should spur employee motivation, reward achievement and make employees’ work meaningful and challenging.

Understand Your Real Job

As a manager, your job is not to do the work; it is to delegate the work. However, “unwillingness or inability to delegate is a leading cause of management failure.” As a supervisor – with responsibilities in budgeting and hiring – you must ensure that your employees do good work. Delegate tasks among the employees who can handle each task the best. You are the “hub” of your department, and each of your employees is a vital “spoke.” When you delegate tasks and projects, explain their intent and procedures. Clarify the results you seek. Don’t micromanage. Coach your staff to do their best. “When they succeed, you succeed.”

Managing the Work Environment

A sound work environment motivates employees. Examine existing “company policy and administration.” If you can, dispense with rules and regulations that employees rightfully hate. Most employees report that job satisfaction depends on whether they get along with their bosses. Research shows that 70% of people who quit their jobs leave because of poor relationships with their supervisors. In order to avoid costly turnover, treat your employees with respect.

Monitor your employees’ interpersonal relationships. Hire people who do great work and get along well with their colleagues. Employees can’t be happy in the workplace if they feel undervalued. Express your appreciation daily and do all you can at your level to make sure your staffers receive fair salaries.

Enriching Jobs

To help your employees feel positive and motivated, “enrich,” that is, redesign, their jobs. Don’t think of “job enrichment” as “job enlargement” – don’t simply add more duties. Increase the job’s scope to make it more responsible and complete. Give employees the autonomy to make decisions about how they do their jobs.

You can’t enrich a job if you don’t understand how it fits into your department’s workflow and work processes. Analyze all the related tasks that your employees handle. Consider how these interlocking parts affect the position you plan to enrich. To handle enriched jobs properly, your employees may need training to upgrade their skills.

Managing Motivation

To build employee motivation, make sure your staff members can achieve something meaningful, even if those achievements are small. Recognize people publicly when they do good work. Employees value recognition, so offer it as often as is appropriate. Most managers honor their workers too infrequently.

Enable deserving employees to advance. Promotions motivate even the best workers, as do additional training and education. People welcome opportunities to grow. Make sure you can justify any training or education you authorize for a particular employee. Be careful about sanctioning employee attendance at tradeshow and conferences. Usually, their attendance does not benefit the company in any way.

Department Management

Managing your department involves taking four kinds of action:

1. **“Planning”** – Prioritize your important tasks; establish goals and the means to achieve them; budget and forecast.
2. **“Organizing”** – Identify the work function that each employee will perform and the resources he or she requires.
3. **“Influencing”** – Motivate and direct your employees without giving them orders.
4. **“Controlling”** – Tracking how work is unfolding calls for planned “feedback, quantitative reports” and meeting updates.

Successful department management requires effective, two-way communication between manager and employees. Both parties have to listen to each other carefully and heed the other’s viewpoint.

Decision Making

Resist the urge to make decisions quickly. Even though you make the final call, involve everyone who will be affected by the outcome. Gather the requisite facts to make an informed choice. Encourage affected employees to participate in decision making.

Some decisions matter a lot; others not so much. Consider purchase choices, for example. Determine whether a purchase entails “an initial cost or...ongoing annual expenses.” Reflect on all associated outlays, including “insurance, maintenance” and operating personnel. Perform cost-benefit analyses as necessary.

Hiring Your Employees

Hiring choices are your most important managerial decisions. Your department will reflect the quality of your hires. Refer to the 80/20 rule for hiring: Select candidates who are in “the top 20%” of applicants in talents and skills. After all, “people are not your most important asset. The right people are.”

Look for experienced people with positive attitudes, expertise, impressive accomplishments and solid recommendations. Create and update a list of top-quality job candidates. Your list should include people who already work for your company, since they know its culture and understand its functions. Always initiate contact through your HR department and work closely with it.

Individual Management

Prepare job descriptions for all employees in your department. A proper job description includes a catalog of work responsibilities, ideal job qualifications, and a checklist that covers requisite talents, technical skills, and “interpersonal and communication” abilities.

Develop responsibility tables for each employee. Show two columns of information. In the first column, detail the job’s responsibilities. In the second, show the “quantitative metrics and timelines” that indicate success or failure in the performance of each responsibility. These tables help you and your employees monitor goals, assign tasks, equalize workloads, enrich positions, maintain proper workflow and handle annual performance reviews.

Performance Reviews

Most employees hate annual performance reviews, which evoke overtones of “Theory X command-and-control management.” The typical annual performance review is a one-sided

“Know when to delegate instead of doing the work yourself.”

“As manager, you should continuously monitor the workplace, being on the lookout for problems that are causing significant dissatisfaction and unhappiness.”

“Your...job is to perform the managerial duties that only you can do and leave the actual departmental work to people who were hired to do it.”

“Except for a very short period of time, people are never completely satisfied with their salary or bonus and will always want more.”

affair in which the manager details an employee's personal and professional strengths and weaknesses. The link between these reviews and potential salary increases or promotions adds to the tension.

Make each performance review as painless as possible and even productive. Give your employees the review form and attribute-rating sheet in advance. Ask each person to fill in necessary information and to review the responsibility table, detailing the accomplishments they found most satisfying. Minimize criticism during the review. Avoid discussing personalities but do talk about behavior. Hold interim monthly reviews to make annual reviews less traumatic.

Managing Your Boss

Your happiness at work depends to a notable degree on how well you get along with your own boss. Make sure to develop and maintain a positive working relationship. Remember everything you want from your employees and deliver that performance to your boss – along with your allegiance.

Keep your boss fully informed. Find out what he or she needs to know and how often you need to provide that information. Be flexible – even when your boss is not. Avoid contention. Hammer out differences in private; always demonstrate public support for your boss, whether or not you agree with his or her decisions.

The Successful Manager

Imagine that your supervisor, employees or HR department officials ask you to explain your management philosophy; they want to know how you prefer to work with them. Muster your knowledge and experience to offer the best possible responses:

- **Your HR department** – Your goal is to develop a strong working partnership with HR on all employee matters and related issues. Promise to request HR's help when you must fill vacancies within your department.
- **Your employees** – Tell your staff members that you believe they all want to leverage their individual talents fully, do good work, make meaningful decisions and grow professionally. Promise to delegate important, challenging work to each person and to hold monthly staff meetings to keep everyone informed about what's going on with the company. Openly explain your intention to work out disagreements privately and to prioritize sound, two-way communication. Explain that you want to work closely with each one of them to develop individual job responsibilities that fulfill their needs for autonomy. Ask your employees to let you know when problems arise so you can resolve them jointly.
- **Your supervisor** – Make sure your boss knows you want to work well together. Assure your superior that your department will meet its objectives and then do your work in a way that reflects well on the company. Pledge your best effort to stay within budget, to keep the boss posted on progress and problems, and to demonstrate your support. Offer to take on any tasks he or she would like to delegate to you in the future.

“Two-way communication happens when both sides get a chance to speak and listen, and both are open-minded, rather than certain from the start that the other is wrong.”

“Most people want to learn, do a good job, use their talents, accept responsibility, manage their own work, control their own fate, solve problems, make decisions, achieve positive results, be recognized for their good work and grow within the organization.”

“Everyone wants to be recognized, even those who say they do not care – even top management.”

About the Author

Steven R. Smith, a registered pharmacist, spent 42 years serving in management and executive positions in the pharmaceutical industry.