



Middle Managers: Are Your Companies Invested in Developing Your Coaching Capabilities? If Not, Are You?

The role of the middle manager is changing and, dare I say, advancing. The need for coaching at the middle manager level has never been greater than it appears to be today. Letian Zhang, Assistant Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School, shared his research in the American Journal of Sociology (September 2023). The days of command-and-control leadership are disappearing rapidly. The skills required to manage and lead others has become ever more complex and complicated and technology is only partially responsible for this change.

What was formerly the norm of top-down leadership is now more the bottom-up approach where the manager/leader needs to inspire, motivate, and foster creativity among employees. Zhang's research used linguistic analysis to examine more than 34 million online managerial level job postings and found that supervisory experience decreased by 23% while collaborative skills and experience increased by three times between 2007 and 2021. Collaboration became the name of the game in Indeed.com reviews growing by 22 percent. Words such as *supervisory experience* decreased by 8 percent between 1985 and 2015 while the word *collaboration* increased by 37 percent.

Zhang found an interesting correlation between collaborative job postings and innovation in organizations. Using the research and development budgets of the companies whose job postings samples were used for his study, he found that those companies that spent more on R&D also tend to seek managers skilled at collaboration. Distinctions were recognized depending upon the industry (i.e., software companies higher in collaboration than hardware companies.)

Okay, so now that we know this and have proof of the correlation, so what? Because the world is changing rapidly, what the world of work looks like today, it is difficult to say what it will look like in the not-too-distant future – say 10 or 15 years. Technical skills will remain important, however, edging up the scale is the need for social skills, cognitive skills, the capacity to acquire fresh knowledge, and the ability to adapt. These interpersonal skills will become even more important to the rise of collaborative work environments and the managers who lead the frontline level employees in these organizations.

Do you need help with these skills?

Let's talk. Reach out to rhonda@careerpointeconsulting.com or visit www.careerpointconsulting.com for more information.

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