

Career Rx

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Moving into Management

As you grow and develop professionally, one path that may be open to you is management. As an individual contributor, you are expected to achieve results based on your own expertise. Management can be a major paradigm shift from what you are accustomed to. Most people have fond memories of some managers and less glowing ones of others. Striving for excellence in management is different from trying to be a great individual contributor.

The most important thing to do when you will be leading other people is to prepare yourself. Most professionals are trained and educated to be proficient in their profession. Managing other people is a different discipline. Many first time managers often fall into the trap of doing what they always did only at a larger scale. While working harder than ever, they fail to grasp the concept of leading a team to accomplish the work. This can result in treating your staff as helpers or gofers rather than self motivated professionals. If you do feel like you are working much harder than you were before, this is a likely cause.

It is not difficult to learn how to be a good leader but you do have to make an effort at learning it. There are many good books and coaches that can help you. You may ask your manager or human resources group if there are mentors and courses available. It is important to find resources that are in harmony with the culture of your organization. If the culture of your company is for an example, centered on Stephen Covey's approach (*The Speed of Trust*) don't focus Robert Ringer (*Winning Through Intimidation*) or vice versa. Become a student of leadership practices to help you understand the largely untaught aspects of how people are motivated. You will need to integrate your style, the culture of the organization and the readiness of your team when formulating how you want to lead. Start with current practices and move towards your integrated approach, understanding it will take some time, so encourage your team to take the journey with you.

As a manager, you need to understand the goals of the organization. They may be more varied or more subtle than the ones that you were previously aware of. Some are universal, such as productivity and quality, while others may be less obvious, like the need for positive cash flow or reprioritizing projects.

When you are transitioning to management, consider your emotional readiness, emotional intelligence and tactical or short term and long term strategies. Emotional Readiness is your ability to accept the new role and adjust to the required relational shifts with colleagues, team members, vendors and others. There may be the need to prove yourself along with some "fear" of not knowing yet and not wanting others to know how unsure you may be. This is prime opportunity to think about how to gain the support of your colleagues and team members. How do you encourage collaboration and sharing to create a learning environment so everyone is growing with you? Creating such an environment where everyone is along for their learning curve is a very powerful way to gain support and respect. This plays into the tactical and longer term strategy if sustained. Awareness of Emotional Intelligence is the key to managing your reactions. Many times, an individual's fears manifest in anger, frustration and sometimes inappropriate actions. Another tactical strategy for the newly promoted manager is to observe by actively listening and asking open ended questions. Create a list of key projects driven off the organization's business strategies including short term and long term deliverables that you can review with your team and management to gain mutual agreement. Discuss the tentative timeframe for each project. Review this timeline carefully, as this can become one of your success measurements.

Consider the team you are working with. Where can you gain additional support if need? What do you know about your team? What motivates them? What do they want to know about you, as their new manager? What assumptions do you and the team, have that may need to be tossed away? Ask what will change their motivation regarding the work they need to deliver on? Have the group share their views and approaches that have worked and that have not worked. Ask them to see these approaches holistically – what was happening at the time within the organization and with the client relationship,

what was the economy and competition like, what did our organization offer to allow it to stand out? There is great team learning and capturing the ideas in a collaborative nature will engage and provide a framework for a tactical strategy. It may need guidance – this can be where your strength as a team leader can come into the picture. Pose your ideas into thought questions and allow the team to engage you further to frame the team and project guidelines. Understanding that engagements are dynamic and always changing, and keeping the lines of communications open are critical to your success.

It is always better to assume others are smarter than you are when you are communicating. Remember, being honest and interested in the well being of your team and the organization at large is a prerequisite for trust. Trust leads to cooperation and high performing teams. I will be exploring additional management and leadership insights in future articles.

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Lisa's extensive human resources and coaching experience with Fortune 500 companies, small enterprises, medium-sized firms, and non-profit organizations gives her the unique ability to bring together wide-ranging perspectives on career transitions, executive and leadership development. She has consulted with a wide variety of sectors — consumer goods, financial services, healthcare, media and entertainment, pharmaceutical and life sciences, publishing, professional services, technology, and non-profit. Lisa has a passion for motivational speaking, conducts career forums, and provides executive and career coaching.

Lisa's greatest strength is that she enables individuals and organizations to see themselves in new ways, freeing them to achieve their goals. Lisa can be reached at Lisa@ChenofskySinger.com.