

# Improving the



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# BOTTOM LINE

Where Have all the  
Good Managers  
Gone?

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER courtesy of ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS MANAGEMENT

## Where Have all the Good Managers Gone?

Almost no one aspires to be a good manager these days. However, why should they when so much attention and resources are devoted to leadership development. Therefore, everyone wants to be a great leader. However, all leaders have to manage people. The separation of management from leadership is dangerous because leading without good management results in a failure to execute. So, if failure to execute is one of the top reasons for why organizations fail, then why don't we get back to what it takes to be a good, strong manager?

According to traditional management theory, managers are supposed to plan, organize, coordinate, and control. The truth is, pressures of reacting to urgent matters supplant most reaction and planning. Managers are busy responding to the urgencies of each day. Additionally, they take on too much work, operate with continual interruptions, and make instant decisions. There is no time to step back and consider bigger issues. This leads to acting with superficial and fragmented information.

Management skills as they are taught in business schools today bear little resemblance to what goes on in the trenches. Management theory is based on the studies of Taylor, Follet and Fayol that date back to the beginning of the 20th century. Every decade has brought more research and authors who have contributed to the understanding of how to manage organizations effectively. Gurus come and go but managers still have to strive to get work done through others. The way they do this, however, has been changing.

As organizations become less hierarchical in structure, they are evolving to more democratic styles of managing people. As organizations and businesses become more technologically adept, more global, and more consumer oriented, managers must have high levels of interpersonal and communication skills, emotional intelligence, and strong collaborative abilities.

*"No job is more vital to our society than that of the manager. It is the manager who determines whether our social institutions serve us well or whether they squander our talents and resources."*

*– Henry Mintzberg*

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## What Does a Manager Actually Do?

All managers have to get things done through others. The manager is supposed to plan, organize, coordinate, and control.

Managers learn to juggle several issues at one time, often falling victim to fragmented communications and superficial decisions. Unfortunately, that is the reality of what



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managers are dealing with. The pressures of the job in the trenches can seem far away from any plan, control, or big picture issues of strategy and vision. Innovation? Thinking outside the box? That comes after the fires are put out.

The consequences of long term intense pressure are fatigue and stress. Managers can then fall into the trap of constant busyness, losing their focus on purpose, which leads to fragmented results.

Management expert Henry Mintzberg (Harvard Business Review, March-April 1990) outlines ten roles that a manager must face daily that remain constant today.

Whether you are a supervisor, front line foreman, or CEO, success hinges first on recognizing the roles that you are expected to perform as a manager.

### Interpersonal roles:

- ▶ **Figurehead:** you represent your group to your organization and the community at large.
- ▶ **Leader:** you hire, train, and motivate employees.
- ▶ **Liaison:** you maintain contact with colleagues and stakeholders outside your immediate chain of command.

### Informational roles:

- ▶ **Monitor:** you leverage your personal network to scan the environment for vital information.
- ▶ **Disseminator:** you feed information to subordinates who lack your access to critical data.
- ▶ **Spokesperson:** you provide information on behalf of your unit to senior management and outside organizations.

### Decisional roles:

- ▶ **Entrepreneur:** you initiate projects to improve your unit's processes or profits.
- ▶ **Disturbance Handler:** you manage crises precipitated by employees, customers, suppliers, systems, or accidents.
- ▶ **Resource Allocator:** you decide who will get what, coordinate the impact of interrelated decisions, and allocate managerial time.
- ▶ **Negotiator:** you use strategic information to resolve grievances, establish contracts, and promote shared decisions.

These are the ten different roles that a manager should be fulfilling. If you, as a manager, want to improve your managerial skills, take a good look at what actually happens. How do you spend your time during the day? What activities are you engaged in? Are you really engaged in all ten roles?

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## Measuring the Activities of Managers

Effective management requires reflective systematic planning. Research shows that managers work at an unrelenting pace and their activities are short, varied, and discontinuous. They are biased toward action and spend little time reflecting.

In one study, half the activities engaged in by executives lasted less than nine minutes. A study of 56 foremen in the U.S. found they averaged 583 activities per 8-hour shift, an average of 1 every 48 seconds. Executives meet a steady stream of callers and mail all day long. Many managers leave their doors open to encourage the free flow of information, but also thereby encourage interruptions. Again, there is little time for reflection or planning.

Managers are constantly being told to delegate more, but most managers end up doing work alongside others. Many times managers engage in routine duties to fill staff vacancies. Other times, they deal with important or difficult customers to avoid losing an account.

*“Plain old management is complicated and confusing. Be global, managers are told, and be local. Collaborate, and compete. Change, perpetually, and maintain order. Make the numbers while nurturing your people.”*

*How is anyone supposed to reconcile all this? The fact is, no one can. To be effective, managers need to face the juxtapositions in order to arrive at a deep integration of these seemingly contradictory concerns. That means they must focus not only on what they have to accomplish but also on how they have to think. Managers need various ‘mind-sets.’”*

*-- Henry Mintzberg, Harvard Business Review, 2003*

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## Why Managers Don't Delegate More

Managers are privy to information others don't have because of their position of authority and status. Managers show a bias for verbal interactions over written procedures, and many times hold processes in their heads. This means that it is often expedient for them to go ahead and do something, rather than take the time to explain or train someone else.

Managers process information, make decisions, and schedule tasks using their judgment and intuition. Because of their preference for verbal interactions, many times their managerial processes remain locked inside their heads. No wonder it is hard to delegate!

The pressures on managers are becoming worse. In the past, managers needed only to respond to owners and directors. Now they have subordinates and team leaders, and more democratic standards.

There is less freedom to issue unexplained orders. There are growing numbers of outside influences upon a business -- consumer groups and government regulators -- and in the case of global businesses, foreign governmental controls.

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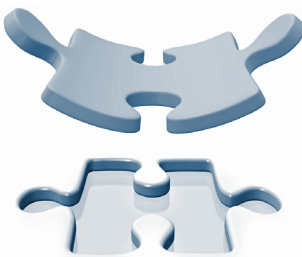
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## The Managerial Mind-Sets

Mintzberg proposes five mind-sets to overcome these managerial obstacles. By focusing more on how they think rather than on what they should do, successful managers think their way through their jobs. This allows them to deal more adeptly with both the internal demands of the company and its people and with the world around them.

- ▶ 1. A reflective mind-set allows you to be thoughtful, to see familiar experiences in a new light, and to set the stage for innovative products and services.
- ▶ 2. An analytical mind-set ensures that you make decisions based on in-depth data, both quantitative and qualitative.
- ▶ 3. A worldly mind-set is necessary to operate in diverse regions with cultural and social insights to serve varied customers.
- ▶ 4. A collaborative mind-set means that you orchestrate relationships among individuals and teams to produce your products and services.
- ▶ 5. An action mind-set energizes you to create and expedite the best plans for achieving your strategic goals.

Regularly accessing all five mind-sets will ensure better management. A manager's effectiveness is significantly influenced by the amount of insight he or she has into his or her work. Performance depends on how well a manager understands and responds to the pressures and dilemmas of the job. You can't do this without some degree of introspection and reflection.



## Nurturing Success

Why do many managers understand so much about employees and organizational performance, and work so hard, yet do so much that ends up undermining performance? Knowing what to do isn't enough. Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton studied this phenomenon for their book, *The Knowing-Doing Gap*. Managers spend time fighting internal battles and end up with little time for external competitors. Worse, they spend their energies competing for internal recognition instead of getting results with customers and products.

James Kouzes, co-author of "The Leadership Challenge" with Barry Posner, describes five best practices for getting extraordinary things done in organizations.

- ▶ 1. Effective managers "**challenge the process**" to make sure it's constantly improved.
- ▶ 2. They "**inspire a shared vision of the future**" that followers deeply believe in and embrace with enthusiasm.
- ▶ 3. They "**enable others to act**", fostering collaboration and strengthening individual capacity to make a new vision a new reality.
- ▶ 4. They "**walk the talk**" or "**model the way**," setting an example by their own behaviors to show others how the organization can best stay true to its vision and values.
- ▶ 5. And they "**encourage the heart**" -- they recognize individuals for their contributions and then celebrate the community of people who care passionately about the destiny of the enterprise.

Technology, marketplace, and social changes have trained and developed today's managers with ever more sophisticated resources. Most managers know more about how to collaborate, how to communicate, how to make decisions, and how to get stuff done than their predecessors ever did. But the overwhelming majority of the tools, structures, and support they get are still designed to ensure success of the corporation -- not necessarily theirs.

Companies that wish to retain top managers with the crucial skills and extraordinary talents so necessary to sustaining business results will have to look upon their managers as important resources -- and nurture them accordingly.

The manager is looked upon as the single biggest factor for retaining employees (Gallup Organization). Nurturing good managers is crucial for building great companies.

One of the best ways to nurture good people is to provide them with development opportunities through professional coaching. Having a coach is a good way to develop stronger managerial skills and build resilience in a manager. Those companies that provide coaching to their managers see results in performance, not only in the manager but also in the manager's people.

## *From Empowerment to Self-Managing Teams*

A truly collaborative mind-set does not involve managing people so much as managing the relationships among people, teams, and projects across divisions and alliances. Getting into a truly collaborative mind-set means getting beyond empowerment. In fact, the word empowerment implies that the people who know the work best must somehow receive power from their managers to do it.

A collaborative mind-set means getting away from the heroic style of managing and moving into a more engaging style. It provides a way for people to manage themselves.

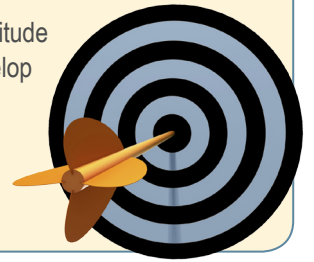
Engaging managers listen more than they talk; they get out of their offices to see and feel more than they remain in them to sit and figure. They foster collaboration among others. They do less controlling, allowing other people to be in greater control of their own work.

Great managers don't make things happen. Rather, they help establish the structures, conditions, and attitudes by which things get done. This requires active collaboration. To be collaborative means to be inside, be involved, and distribute management beyond managers so that responsibility flows to whoever can take the initiative and pull things together. This new style of managing is really about creating self-managing teams.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Many companies have failed to recognize the need for great managers and how developing their skills are as important to an organization as developing leadership talent. Additionally, because they have failed to recognize the need, organizations have never obtained the knowledge, developed the processes, or acquired the resources to develop managers.

How important are managers in your organization? Do your managers have the skills, knowledge, and attitude required to drive the achievement of strategic objectives in your organization? If not, what will you do to develop your managers that will execute?



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