The Essential Skills Of A Manager In Today's Corporate Environment

Donna Guida

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THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS OF A MANAGER IN TODAY'S CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT

BY

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Thesis Advisor

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communications
Seton Hall University

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wants to take this opportunity to thank those individuals who made it possible for her to complete this study. To begin, she would like to thank her family, especially her parents who have given her tremendous support and encouragement, as they do with everything she pursues. The author would also like to thank her colleagues at Prudential Financial who all contributed to her education. The author would like to recognize Chuck for his patience, understanding and involvement in her studies. Lastly, the author owes a special ‘thank you’ to her advisor Dr. Donald N. Lombardi who is a constant inspiration to everyone he meets. His passion, optimism, benevolence, humor, guidance, and altruism are unparalleled.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Most people quit their jobs because they are sick of their boss rather than unhappy about their pay or career prospects, according to new research.” (BlessingWhite, Managing Personal Growth)

“You work hard every day, but you don’t feel your boss or your workplace recognize your efforts. You can’t remember the last time anyone thanked you for your contributions.” (Heathfield)

“Your relationship with your manager is damaged beyond repair. You have sought help to mend the relationship but you know it is too damaged for recovery. (Perhaps you were untrustworthy, missed work on too many days, or the manager acts like an untrustworthy jerk.) Whatever the reason, the relationship is irrecoverably damaged.” (Heathfield)

Do these quotes sound familiar – or do you find them shocking? The author first learned of such remarks while working for a human resources consulting firm called BlessingWhite, Inc. The author worked for BlessingWhite, Inc. in many capacities from graphic design to marketing to training. It was during her many training sessions that she realized most people were unhappy in their jobs because of a poor relationship with their boss. Her job, as a trainer, was to help them come to that realization, then help them either move on or find a way to develop a better relationship with their boss.

**Thesis Question**

This training experience, combined with the author’s 10-year career working for others, inspired this thesis on the most essential skills of a manager in today’s corporate environment. Throughout the last 10 years, the author has held six different positions at three different companies under seven different bosses. Each boss was an older female, which introduces a subsidiary question for this research – does gender have an impact on the way people manage others?
The table below, created by Broverman, consists of characteristics of masculine and feminine stereotypes. Although the male and female stereotypes are the complete opposite of each other, the male characteristics are categorized as “competencies”, while the female characteristics are labeled “incompetencies.” Once we reveal the essential skills, it will be apparent that neither group of characteristics in the table below would help or derail a manager from being effective once the essential skills were mastered. So it is the author’s belief that gender does not play a role in the success of a manager. Although men and women communicate differently, either gender can use proper management techniques to be a successful manager.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Stereotypes (Incompetencies)</th>
<th>Male Stereotypes (Competencies)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all independent</td>
<td>Almost always acts as a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very passive</td>
<td>Very blunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very illogical</td>
<td>Very Ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all self-confident</td>
<td>Not at all aware of feelings of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very excitable in a minor crisis</td>
<td>Not uncomfortable about being aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very submissive</td>
<td>Very competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to separate feelings from ideas</td>
<td>Almost always hides emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has difficulty making decisions</td>
<td>Very sloppy in habits (Broverman)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On another note, the dynamics of the male/female relationship may play a role. An Oxygen Media poll found that 65 percent of women resent women who are either in power, or act like they are. It has also been found that most men do not feel comfortable being managed by women because men are “supposed” to be in the higher position. It would seem that gender does play a role in the success of the manager/employee relationship; however, one gender does not possess.
superior management skills to the other. So for the purposes of this research, gender is not an issue but would make a great topic for future research.

In personally assessing the seven bosses the author has experienced throughout her 10-year career, two were decent, two were horrible, one was terrific, one was unavailable, and the current one is the best so far. After working under so many different bosses and only deeming two as outstanding, one begins to question her abilities as an employee. After realizing a certain amount of maturity, coaching, and experience, along with a solid work ethic, could turn any employee into a superstar, one begins to wonder how difficult managing others could be. Finally, the author would find out for herself – she currently manages a staff of three.

**Purpose**

After speaking with colleagues and friends, the author realized her story was not unique. And as she learned during her training experience, many workers would trade in their boss immediately. The author can understand this after working for mostly horrible to mediocre bosses. The author asked herself what her past bosses could have done differently, and compiled a preliminary list of requisites.

First, her bosses used a “one-size-fits-all” approach to managing, instead of getting to know her and her personality and adjusting accordingly. This is not to say that it is the manager’s responsibility to adjust to each employee’s personality without any accountability on the employee. Employees must adapt to the processes and guidelines set forth by the manager, however, as a new manager, the author has quickly learned that each employee is an individual and what motivates one employee will completely annoy another.

Second, most managers do not have the ability to actually do the job. It is very frustrating for an employee when her boss constantly requires her assistance to complete the very basics of the
job she is managing. As a manager, the author would feel very uncomfortable managing a staff that performed tasks she herself could not do. Of course, as a manager advances the corporate ladder, the less familiar he will be with his staff's actual responsibilities, however he most likely filled a similar role at some point in his career.

Third, lack of communication is a big complaint from unhappy employees. In the author's experience, one of her bosses worked remotely and was only in the office two days a week. This made communication challenging and nearly impossible. It is important to note that each manager communicates differently. Some managers prefer face-to-face communication, while others prefer to keep their teams updated via e-mail or status reports. Either technique is acceptable as long as the entire team gets the message. Some employees prefer face-to-face communication over e-mail, so if a manager's technique is e-mail, there may be a learning curve for that particular employee that the manager needs to take into account.

The purpose of this thesis is to learn why managers do a poor job at leading their teams and how they can improve their managerial skills. One can also argue that managers do a fine job and employees simply expect too much from their employer. If you had the perfect boss, you might have witnessed these events:

- A recent hire is welcomed with a handwritten note posted on the front door announcing his arrival to co-workers and customers.

- An employee's birthday is celebrated with cake, song and photos.

- Ice cream is ordered to soothe the nerves of a cranky team.

- If someone is injured, he is driven home; his dog is walked and his groceries are delivered.

- The worst day working for the boss is better than the best day at a previous job.
These all sound like wonderful perks for any employee, however, how possible is it to fulfill such employee wishes and please each staff member? It would be nice to be able to offer some of the perks above, however, most leaders have a bottom line to consider, productivity quotas to meet, and a boss they themselves have to accommodate. Most employees do not realize the many pressures a leader has to manage. The author finds it fair to say that most employees do expect too much from their managers. By the same token, managers need to communicate their pressures to their employees so that employees will gain an understanding of how fair they really are being treated.

It is also easier to please employees when a manager has a small team reporting to him. This brings us to another subsidiary question – Does the amount of direct reports play a role in the success of a manager? Obviously, the more direct reports a manager has, the less aware of each employee’s needs he can be. Management structures are usually organized so that a high-level manager (usually an executive) has a few direct reports who each have direct reports who each have direct reports and so on and so on. So although the high-level executive ultimately has a staff of 50, he only has about five direct reports who directly report to him on all 50 employees. This being the case, there should be no difference in the ability of a manager based on level or amount of direct reports.

**Definition of Terms**

A manager is anyone in a supervisory role with more than three people to supervise. A supervisor is responsible for annual performance evaluations where employees' performance is rated based on skills and competencies. This evaluation determines any pay increase or bonus, or lack thereof, for the employee. The term “manager” includes low-level team leaders to senior level, executive managers. Since managers at any level would be required to complete
performance evaluations on their direct reports, all levels are included. The difference is in the layering. Managers at a senior level usually have more evaluations to review than lower level managers. For instance, a senior vice president would have maybe 10 direct reports who would each have five direct reports who would each have four direct reports who would each have four to eight direct reports. That senior vice president is responsible for 10 direct reports and their direct reports and their direct reports and so on and so on. Nonetheless, this senior vice president’s relationship with his 10 direct reports should be no different than the final team leader’s relationship with his four to eight direct reports.

When referring to today’s workplace the researcher is referencing corporate America, specifically in an office setting. Another subsidiary question is introduced when discussing labor unions or manual labor management relationships. Because manual labor teams are usually out of the office on jobs, a whole new set of challenges arises. This alone makes the manual labor manager/employee relationship much different from the office relationship.

**Subsidiary Questions**

A few subsidiary questions were covered in the previous sections of this chapter, but there are a few more subsidiary questions to consider, for instance, does managing a business professional differ from managing a manual worker? Managing a business professional is a far more demanding task than managing the manual worker. Fear, such as fear of economic suffering or the fear of job security, although very possible in today’s business climate, can have a much larger impact on the manual worker than the business professional. Business professionals, except perhaps the lowest levels (mail clerks, assistants), are not productive under the spur of fear, only self-motivation and self-direction can make him productive. He has to be achieving in order to produce at all (Drucker, p. 176.)
Manual workers tend to be offsite working autonomously and directly with customers most of the time. Business professionals are generally situated in an office setting attending meetings and interacting with co-workers and business partners throughout the day. In the manual setting, an employee is rarely face-to-face with his manager, whereas the business professional is almost always within a few feet of his manager’s office. It is a much different dynamic to manage someone you see all day compared with a worker you hardly see. The author will not discuss the essential skills of managing a manual worker and will solely focus on managing a business professional in a corporate environment.

**Limitations of Study**

Does age play a role in how managers manage? Or do years of experience play a role in how managers manage? It seems obvious that the amount of experience a manager has will determine her ability to succeed as a manager. However, age is a crucial dynamic. Research has shown that a younger woman managing an older woman is sure to become a failed relationship. Because women are thought to be emotional, older women feel disrespected by younger female managers (Tannen, p. 154.)

Years of experience should improve a manager’s ability to succeed, although past experience could taint a manager’s abilities. If a manager was successful in the past because she managed a team with whom her personality clicked, she may hold a new team to those same standards and use the same approach with that team. As we discussed earlier, a one-size-fits-all approach does not work with all employees.

Also, a first-time manager will probably have some confidence issues to deal with as she begins her new role. It is important for a new manager to convey confidence in her new role
while learning the essential skills of such a position. New managers should not be classified as "unqualified" because everyone has been a manager for the first time.

The author believes that the essential skills of a new manager will make a veteran manager and a first-time manager successful. Both have to be willing to learn the essential skills. That being said, the veteran manager may have a harder time having to change his style, if necessary, while the new manager might be more easily accepting of the essential skills.

**Objective**

The author’s realizations, interviews with other professionals (employees and managers), survey results, and further research will help determine what the essential skills are for a manager in today’s corporate environment. The author will look at the history of management and the workforce. Today’s workforce is more educated and ambitious than even a few years ago. Most employees today have at least a four-year degree (http://nces.ed.gov). Sociology and psychology play a large role in how people are managed and how people need to be managed. This thesis will share some insights from experts regarding the human psyche and how it is best managed. A survey conducted by the author will reveal what professionals today think are the most essential skills of managers today. The author conducted interviews to find out why these are the essential skills for today's manager. Finally, this thesis will provide a guide for new, current, and veteran managers to use as a resource when managing and leading others.
CHAPTER 2: MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES: HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL

Historical Perspectives of Management as a Science

The management boom swept over the entire world from the end of World War II through the 1960s. This boom reached every country in the world, except perhaps Communist China. This boom changed society, economy and business. What’s more – it created an awareness of management. This boom kept strong until the early 1970s when many books were written that discussed how this boom would last forever. Although management programs and books continued in high demand due to non-business managements, such as public service, consumers of the management boom became more demanding and discriminating (Drucker, p. 11.)

As Drucker explains, “Applications to business schools and advanced management courses continued to climb, however students became quite critical of curriculum and teaching performance. The mystique of management was gone most likely due to business debacles that uncovered the less-than-heroic side of management. Managers themselves began to realize that management is challenging work rather than a panacea, and that management techniques, no matter how sophisticated, are not magic spells.” (Drucker, p. 16.)

As stated by Drucker, the foundation on which the management boom had been based in the obscure years prior to World War II were being outpaced by new developments. New knowledge, new basic approaches, and new understanding were needed. Nonetheless, the awareness of management as a force, a function and a responsibility and a discipline will remain (Drucker, p. 15.)

Proof of such necessary change is apparent when we look at when the management boom began. Then, a “carrot-and-stick” approach was used, where managers would provide workers with incentives that would force workers to perform at their top level. Today, the stick is no
longer available to managers and the carrot is becoming less and less of an incentive. Years ago, the stick was hunger and fear. Today, fear is a de-motivator rather than an incentive. One reason for this change in motivational tactic is education. People today are far more educated than during the explosion of the management boom. (http://nces.ed.gov.) People today are more employable because they are more educated and experienced. Losing one's job is still unpleasant, but it is no longer catastrophic (Drucker, p. 235.)

It is obvious by today's ever-changing business world that new basic approaches to management are needed. Today's employees are more educated and sophisticated than they were in the 1960s. They are also far less concerned with losing their job. Decades ago, people would remain employed with the same company for 20+ years. Today, companies are lucky to retain employees for more than three years. Competition of talent has become fierce, even in a weak job market. Years ago, employees were not recruited in the middle of the workday by a professional recruiter; today that practice is common.

The history of management is a short and simple path. The management boom began at the end of World War II and held strong through the early 1970s due to the traditional theory 'X' (or carrot-and-stick theory). In the mid 1970s, the boom began to diminish, however the meaning of management remained, but the approach changed significantly due to a more sophisticated workforce and the advancement of new knowledge.

Throughout the history of management, several psychological theories played a part in the many styles of and approaches to management. The author will now discuss several popular theories of management or employee motivation. The author will also cover the many management styles, successful and unsuccessful, used by managers in the past and present.
Organizational Theories as a Science

The theories below begin to reveal the human psyche and how it works. Each theory has a similar point to it and each theory worked well for its time. The author first examined the popular theorists of the early to mid 1900s. These theorists demonstrate a great understanding of the culture of the time. The problem with these theories today is that the world has changed dramatically since their revelation. Once the author began examining the theorists of the mid 1900s, their theories began making more sense because they reflected the culture of today.

Traditional Theory ‘X’

The traditional Theory ‘X’, which can be best ascribed to Sigmund Freud is the so-called ‘carrot and stick’ philosophy of management. This theory was used as the first approach to management during the management boom because at that time, Freud’s philosophies were well respected. This theory says that managers will have to police their staff because they cannot trust them (http://www.accel-team.com.)

Freud was generally known to dislike people. He was also known to be pretty pessimistic believing that people are lazy, lack ambition, take no initiative and are irresponsible. Freud believed that people must be rewarded, coerced, intimidated, and punished. If this theory were valid, then the ‘carrot and stick’ approach would be the only possibility of any achievement or any creative work (http://www.accel-team.com.)

Again, in the years following World War II through the 1960s, Freud’s theory made sense because workers were motivated by fear. Because of the advancements in today’s human psyche and the advancements of business, this theory does not survive.
**Theory ‘Y’ – Douglas McGregor**

Theory ‘Y’ is in sharp contrast to Theory ‘X’. McGregor believed that people want to learn and that work is their natural activity to the extent that they develop self-discipline and self-development. People are rewarded, not by materialism, but by the freedom to achieve and to perform difficult and challenging work autonomously (http://www.accel-team.com).

Some have argued that theory ‘Y’ is soft and slack. However, this theory has been proved successful in the United States and elsewhere. This theory allows the leader of a group to be ‘hands off’ allowing the group to discuss matters freely and make decisions confidently. Such practice helps leaders select and ‘groom’ new leaders. The leader no longer needs to hanker after power. She allows people to develop and most likely enjoys watching the development and actualization of her ‘student’. The use of this theory allows everyone, most of all the organization, to gain as a result (http://www.accel-team.com).

**Theory Z – Abraham Maslow**

Maslow’s Theory ‘Z’ is also a refreshing change from Freud’s Theory ‘X’. Maslow is the main founder of the belief that all good qualities are inherent in people, at birth, although later lost gradually. Maslow believed that a person’s personality is the sum of his works and that only his works survive a person at death. Maslow’s theory of human motivation is, in fact, the basis for McGregor’s theory ‘Y’ briefly described above. Maslow’s theory of human motivation is defined by his description of man’s basic human needs:

- Physiological (lowest)
- Safety
- Love
- Esteem
- Self-actualization (highest)
A person’s behavior is dominated by his/her unsatisfied needs. When one need is satisfied, a person aspires for the next higher one until he/she is totally absorbed in order to attain perfection through self-development. The highest state of self-actualization is characterized by integrity, responsibility, magnanimity, simplicity and naturalness (http://www.accel-team.com.) If the workplace was full of people who were true to Maslow’s theory, there would be no need for managers.

**Hygiene/Motivation Theory – Frederick Herzberg**

According to this theory, people work first and foremost in their own self-enlightened interest. For they are truly happy and mentally healthy through work accomplishments. People’s needs are of two types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal (Hygiene Factors)</th>
<th>Human (Motivators)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relations</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working conditions</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Advancement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Herzberg’s theory, most hygiene factors are addressed and satisfied by ignoring the basic human motivators. Herzberg uncovered some myths about motivators, such as a shorter workweek, increased wages, fringe benefits, and communication. According to his theory, these are not motivators because they do not address the need for recognition, responsibility and advancement. These ‘motivators’ are viewed more as enticements to keep people quiet (http://www.accel-team.com.)

This theory addresses those passive managers who manage by doing the bare minimum. The basic hygiene factors that are met are just that – basic. And they are needs that every organization should meet, such as, normal working conditions and inflation-based salary
increases. It is the manager who develops his/her employees who meets the human motivators of his employees.

**Chris Argyris' Theory**

This theory calls for a restructuring of work in order to enable individuals to develop to the fullest extent. Argyris believes that work will become more meaningful and challenging through self-motivation. If organizations are redesigned for a fuller utilization of workers psychological energy, then satisfaction in work will be more valued than material rewards (http://www.accel-team.com.)

Argyris' theory is beginning to shine some light on where organizations are headed. Organizations are beginning to understand that a basic human need is to be needed and recognized, and as a result, workers are showing signs of increased productivity.

**Rensis Likert Theory**

Likert identified four different styles of management:

- Exploitative-authoritative
- Benevolent-authoritative
- Consultative
- Participative

The participative approach to management proved to be the most effective because it satisfies the whole range of human needs. Major decisions are taken by groups themselves rather than by a single boss. This management style results in achieving high targets and excelled productivity. There is complete trust within the group and the sense of participation leads to a high degree of motivation (http://www.accel-team.com.)

This theory highlights the shift from micro-management to participative leadership. Here we begin to understand the need for managers to lead and the need for workers to participate.
Fred Luthans

Luthans advocates the “contingency approach” on the basis that certain practices work better than others for certain people and certain jobs. For rigid, clearly defined jobs, authoritative leadership and tight controls, for example, may lead to high productivity and satisfaction among workers. In other cases, however, the opposite would work. For example, a job that is to be defined by the worker should probably have looser reigns than the previous example. Therefore, it is necessary for a leader to adapt his/her style to the particular group of workers and the specific job at hand (http://www.accel-team.com.)

New managers are beginning to use this approach. Because these new managers have been managed using some of the ineffective theories mentioned above, and they are more educated, they have a better idea of how their teams want to be managed.

Victor Vroom

Vroom’s “expectancy theory” is an extension of Luthan’s “contingency theory” in that Vroom believes the leadership style should be ‘tailored’ to the particular group and job for each situation. Depending upon the situation, the boss may make the decision or leave it to the group for consensus. Also, individuals should be rewarded with what they feel is important and not what the organization or manager deems important. If a worker would prefer a promotion to a salary increase, then that should be the reward (http://www.accel-team.com.)

Finally Vroom’s theory is setting the new standard for management. Through each theory the author has covered it is apparent that each of those theories would work well in certain situations for certain individuals. That is why none of those theories would work today. Today, workers are much more complex, each with varying degrees of tolerance and work ethic. Individuals have
different needs and desires, so a one-size-fits-all approach is a sure failure. Managers need to adjust their management approach to each individual and each situation.

**The Meaning of Management**

Even through all of these changes in management and theories of management, the definition has remained stable. Although when the management boom began it was thought to simply refer to personnel management. "We know we have to go beyond personnel management. We have to learn to lead people rather than contain them" (Drucker, p. 30.)

This definition or meaning of management begins to uncover the problems with some of the earlier theories of management and begins to shine some light on the rationale behind some of the later theories, like Vroom’s theory. This definition recognizes that the need to contain workers was necessary in the earlier days of the management boom, but today’s workforce requires a completely different approach.

Managers’ traditional approaches fall into three categories:

1. **Philanthropic** – the desire to look after the needs, the housing, the healthcare, the welfare of people who cannot look after themselves.

2. **Procedural** – to handle in an orderly fashion the recurrent chores connected with the employment of people.

3. **Prevention** – to prevent and cure trouble – they see in people, above all, potential threats.

These traditional approaches, however, are not enough. Beyond them we have to learn to look on people as resources and opportunities rather than as problems, costs and threats. We have to learn to lead rather than manage and to direct rather than control." (Drucker, p 30).

Again, we see another definition that sees the need for change based on workforce, not based on the workforce changing to fit the definition. Management still has a philanthropic approach because organizations have a certain responsibility to ensure their employees are paid enough to
live within reasonable means. The procedural responsibilities of management and organizations lie in the simple hygiene factors discussed in Herzberg's theory. Organizations naturally appeal to workers' hygiene factors, it is a person's motivators that organizations need to learn.

In any of the research the author conducted, the same definition is clear. In Drucker's book *Management - Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*, he says, "... we may, within another ten years, become far less concerned with manager development as a means of adapting the individual to the demands of the organization and far more with management development to adapt the organization to the needs, aspirations, and potential of the individual." (p. 35).

Drucker's foresight was right in line with the other definitions discussed above. In organizations today there is a lot of emphasis placed on "development." Managers have been charged with not only making sure employees perform, but also performing for the employee. Managers need to document employees' skills and talents and find ways to build on them. Employees today look to grow and develop their skill set. And employees will do that either with the same company or take any new knowledge they gain it elsewhere, where the pay, benefits and developmental opportunities are better.

"Today's workforce requires managers and supervisors to adapt, competently and constantly, to the needs of an increasingly diverse employee base. By being proactive, and making informed choices, supervisors and managers can gain full productivity from all employee populations." (BlessingWhite). BlessingWhite has been in the manager/employee relationship business since the early 1980s and their definition mirrors Drucker's in that it has become about the employee first then the organization.

We can hardly discuss the definition of management without briefly discussing some basic psychological definitions of human relations. Human relations is the integration of people into a
work situation in a way that motivates them to work together productively, cooperatively, and with economic, psychological, and social satisfaction. It is not intended that the manager shall become an amateur psychologist or sociologist, but some elementary knowledge will add to his understanding of the behavior of his employees (Kevin Davis, p. 4).

Davis emphasizes the need for managers and organizations to strive to appeal to the basic primary needs of individuals, which organizations already do, but Davis also urges managers to concentrate on workers' secondary needs. These secondary needs were also discussed in each theory discussed earlier in this chapter, such as, self-esteem, self-assertion, and social approval. Not only is self-actualization and sense of accomplishment a theory, it is a basic human psychological need that managers need to remember when managing others. Managers also need to keep in mind that each individual has a different level for each secondary need and adjust accordingly to each individual in each situation.

Another valid reason managers should be concerned with meeting workers' primary and secondary needs is that a happy workforce is a productive workforce. If an organization keeps its workforce satisfied, the workforce will be more apt to help the organization succeed because workers will respect the organization and have pride in its employer.

The main reason that impels management to be concerned about morale is its possible effect upon the smoothness and success of organizational operation. High morale should include willing cooperation toward organizational objectives, loyalty to the organization and its leadership, good discipline or the voluntary conformance to rules, regulations, and orders, strong organizational stamina, a high degree of employee interest in the job and the organization, a reasonable display of employee initiative, and pride in the organization (Ralph Davis, p. 552).
Conclusion

In Chapter Two, we learned that the history of management is strong. When management had its big boom in the 1960s, every company bulked up on layers of management. It was easier to manage in the 1960s since people motivators were clear – fear topped the list. It was normal practice to hold someone's job and paycheck dangling as the reward for a good job. Today, thanks to education and experience, workers know there's a better-paying job around the corner, so the fear factor is moot. Today, managers, and even more so, companies, have to meet the needs of their employees in order to retain talent.

Through this analysis of the historical perspectives and psychological theories, it is clear that the definition of management is the same, however the techniques necessary to becoming a successful manager have significantly changed. The survey conducted by the author supports this statement. As you will read in the next chapter, the author's survey revealed the essential skills managers believe they need to be successful and the essential skills employees believe are necessary. Both groups realize the "carrot-and-stick" theory of the past is ineffective today. And they both realize just how many skills are necessary to become an effective manager. However, they both feel some are more important than others.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: PRACTICUM & RESULTS

Survey Objective

This survey was designed to get an overall picture of what employees and managers feel are the most essential skills of managers in today’s corporate environment. To get to the heart of this story, the survey consisted of four sections with five questions each. Each section encompassed a skill set essential to the function of management. The author pre-determined these skill sets based on prior research conducted throughout her graduate studies and her research on theories discussed in Chapter Two. The four sections of the survey were:

- Interpersonal Skills
- Management Skills
- Leadership Skills
- Communication Skills

Each section covered the many tasks and responsibilities of a manager. A table follows that reveals the responses received from survey respondents for each survey question.

Research Methodology

The research methodology the author used for the purpose of this research consisted of a survey distributed to over 100 employees and managers in several different Fortune 500 companies and mid and small companies across the United States. The survey was distributed to an equal amount of managers and employees. Out of the 112 surveys distributed, the author received 101 responses; 49 responses from managers; 52 responses from employees. Managers included entry-level managers, mid-level supervisors, senior management, directors, and vice presidents.

The author also conducted interviews with employees and managers from several different companies, including Prudential Financial, Newark, NJ; The Block, Orange County, CA; Marsh
McLennan, New York, NY; Verizon, Newark, NJ; Blessing White, Skillman, NJ; and Suffolk County Board of Education Long Island, NY. The employees and managers worked in several different areas from accounting and human resources to sales and marketing. Interviewees ranged in level from entry-level to senior management.

In addition to face-to-face and phone interviews, the author asked survey respondents to add skills or comments to the survey. The author will discuss those responses in further detail in the following pages.

The author did not ask survey respondents to reveal demographic information, such as age, gender or years in current position because the author feels the essential skills of a manager in today’s corporate environment can be used by any and every manager regardless of age, gender or job function (see subsidiary questions at the end of Chapter One.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mentoring (coaching)</th>
<th>Listening/Empathy (demonstrates listening skills and understands employee's situation)</th>
<th>Conflict resolution (solves workplace issues quickly and appropriately)</th>
<th>Employee relations (has a genuine interest in the employee on a personal and professional level)</th>
<th>Respected working relationship with team and internal partners</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19/21</td>
<td>20/21</td>
<td>25/19</td>
<td>18/22</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>19/17</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>12/11</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2/0</td>
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Key: # of Employee responses / # of Manager responses
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<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Planning and setting goals (for the team and department)</td>
<td>24/19</td>
<td>20/18</td>
<td>8/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Basic technical acumen (able to do the job)</td>
<td>29/15</td>
<td>18/21</td>
<td>5/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interview and develop staff (hiring, firing, promoting, etc.)</td>
<td>19/18</td>
<td>24/21</td>
<td>9/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Performance evaluations (performed consistently)</td>
<td>21/18</td>
<td>19/18</td>
<td>8/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Staff training and development (promotes education and training to further develop employee's strengths and weaknesses)</td>
<td>20/24</td>
<td>24/14</td>
<td>8/11</td>
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</tbody>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ability to motivate (each employee based on employee's individuality)</td>
<td>19/21</td>
<td>18/17</td>
<td>10/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Team strategies and building (provides strategic direction to team based on organizational strategies)</td>
<td>16/15</td>
<td>26/21</td>
<td>10/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Decision-making (makes appropriate decisions in a timely manner)</td>
<td>24/21</td>
<td>23/18</td>
<td>5/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Delegation (entrusts employees with all reasonable aspects of the employee's responsibilities)</td>
<td>22/20</td>
<td>22/17</td>
<td>8/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Politics (handles office bureaucracy with tact and confidence)</td>
<td>18/21</td>
<td>25/15</td>
<td>9/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear and direct (ensures that team understands messages)</td>
<td>30/21</td>
<td>17/18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings (holds consistent team and one-on-one meetings)</td>
<td>19/16</td>
<td>20/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up (provides employee with specific messages in clear, concise writing, such as e-mail, memo, etc.)</td>
<td>17/19</td>
<td>25/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback (provides specific examples of positive and negative feedback)</td>
<td>25/24</td>
<td>17/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing information (shares all pertinent information with team in clear, timely manner)</td>
<td>24/23</td>
<td>17/15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(see appendix A for a copy of the survey)

**Key Findings I – Communication Leads to Motivation**

One of the main messages captured in the write-in portion of the survey from employees was “managers need to listen well and communicate clearly.” Another popular comment revolved around the need for managers to motivate through communication. One respondent had the following comment: “I feel that in order for a team to be strong, it needs to start from its leader. Goals need to be set in a clear and concise manner to avoid confusion. The main problem I have faced from working on any team is the lack of clear and specific goals and the lack of communication by our manager. The how, what, where, when and why theories should be used when delegating any work to a staff member by a manager to avoid confusion, and to insure all work is completed in a timely manner and, more importantly, correctly.”

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Another respondent had the following comment: “A manager of any kind needs to be a great communicator. Listening is a valuable element in becoming a great communicator. Managers that do not have this ability run the risk of losing the “team” in “teamwork.” Their ability to handle decisions in a timely and efficient manner also promotes their integrity and competency as a manager and are crucial components to the success of the department.”

Another comment: “It’s a mid-manager’s key responsibility to effectively manage and motivate the team to get the job done. In motivating, building a system of trust is essential. Effective communications, goal setting, and management of individuals’ expectations accomplish this. Employees need feedback (both positive and negative) in frequent intervals. Good listening skills, understanding employee’s individual situation, strengths and weaknesses provide managers with the essential tools in structuring a team network. Establishing an open communication channel is the first step. A manager’s communication should be clear, empowering and motivating.”

All of these employee comments have a similar ring — communication is a key characteristic for leaders to possess. It may seem apparent that the ability to listen and communicate clearly are necessary to manage successfully, however, those skills are probably the most lacked by today’s manager. As the comments from employees on the survey reveal, this is the most valued skill of a manager, which leads the author to believe it is also the most lacked skill.

**Key Findings II — It’s All in the Execution**

Most of the manager comments revolved around communication as well, but mostly the face-to-face, uncomfortable kind of communication.

An interesting manager comment discusses the difference in manager level and experience: “The skills rated ‘5’ versus those rated ‘4’, are done so because in my evaluation, most mid-level
managers tend to avoid or delay those tasks that require a face-to-face, uncomfortable discussion or decision. Mastering these same tasks is key for development as a manager. The catch is that if you don’t consistently excel at these skills rated ‘5’, (and you will only do so with practice and precision) you usually stay a solid mid-level manager, but are rarely pegged for advancement.

Another manager comment: “Providing feedback is critical and verbal, informal feedback I think is more important than e-mails, memos, etc. It is more personal and maintains communication lines. If the verbal feedback channels are open, instances where negative feedback must be given are less threatening and more constructive.

Both managers and employees added “communication” as a skill in the comments section of the survey. The difference is in each group’s perception of good communication. Managers feel it is providing feedback; employees feel it is motivating staff. These both essentially have the same meaning because providing feedback can certainly motivate someone if it is provided effectively.

**Key Findings III – Detailed Analysis**

The author looked at each of the four categories of the survey. As you can see from the table of responses above, most skills were rated “Very Important” or “Important”, with a few responses for “Somewhat Important” and little to no responses for “Not Very Important” or “Not Important”. These findings suggest that most employees and managers find all of the skills highlighted in the survey essential for managers to possess. The author went even further to determine which of the five skills in each of the four categories were the ones most rated “Very Important” or “Important”. As suspected, the same skills were rated “Very Important” or “Important” by managers and employees, suggesting that a successful working relationship between managers and employees is easily. Unfortunately, knowing what is important and doing
what is important are two very different things. The remaining chapters will discuss each skill and provide techniques to help managers master each skill.

**Key Findings IV – R E S P E C T – Find Out What It Means to Employees and Managers**

In the Interpersonal Skills category, over 90 percent of employee respondents and over 80 percent of manager respondents find a respected working relationship with their team and internal partners a critical skill for managers to have. The author’s definition of this skill is simple – managers need to establish a healthy, respected working relationship between team members and internal partners. This is achieved by practicing team-building activities, such as, job swaps, consistent team meetings, team recognition and other team-building exercises.

![Bar chart showing the importance of respect in employee and manager perspectives.](image)

**Key Findings V – Know the Job or Develop the Staff to Do the Job?**

With the exception of the following category (Management Skills), all of the other categories had similar responses for each skill. For this category, employees find “basic technical acumen” the most important skill, where managers find “interviewing and developing staff” the most important skill. Perhaps some managers feel that hiring the proper staff to perform the necessary tasks of the department is more important than actually knowing the job themselves. Many would argue that it is impossible to hire properly for a job you don’t know how to perform yourself.
As you will see from the charts below, employees clearly find "basic technical acumen" a critical skill for managers, and although managers find it important, they do not find it as important as employees do. On the "interview and develop staff" pie chart, you will see that managers find that more important than "basic technical acumen". The results from the managerial section prove that managers need to learn the actual job before they attempt to hire and develop staff for the job.

Key Findings VI – Make a Decision

The Leadership Skills category revealed that over 90 percent of both employees and managers find a manager's ability to make an appropriate decision in a timely manner a critical leadership skill. Employees look to managers for answers and when managers hesitate to make a decision or have to check with their superior to make a decision, it damages their employees' perception of them. A manager is a leader to an employee, and a leader should be able to make an appropriate, timely decision.
Key Findings VII – Communicate Clearly and Directly

Communication skills are essential for anyone in and out of the workplace. A person’s personality, upbringing and influences all have an effect on how someone communicates with others. Regardless of what one has learned in the past regarding proper communication skills, the most important technique to communicating, according to the employees and managers of this survey, is communicating clearly and directly and ensuring that each team member understands what was communicated.

The ratings section of the survey reveals the five most essential skills based on manager and employee responses. One of those skills, “communicating clearly and directly” is in line with the additional comments made by employees and managers on the survey.

The other essential skills rated include ‘respected working relationship”, “basic technical acumen”, “develop staff”, and “make decisions”. These are all skills that involve a mastery of communication. As you will read in Chapters Four and Five, all 20 skills introduced in the survey are easily mastered by mastering communication.
Key Findings VIII – Employee Interviews

The author conducted interviews with employees from Marsh McLennan, New York, NY, Verizon, Newark, NJ, and Suffolk County Board of Education, Long Island, NY. The interviews were conducted in an informal setting either in person or via the telephone.

Employees feel that communication is key – everyone needs to know what everyone is doing. The ability of a manager to delegate clearly and honestly is also a key aspect for a manager, according to employees. Some employees feel that some managers are afraid to delegate because they can just do it themselves, however the employee is not learning anything and feels that the manager does not trust his employees. It is also important for managers to listen and really know their employees as individuals. Every employee needs to be treated fairly, however, every employee needs to be handled differently. Instead of providing feedback on an employee’s skills, many managers avoid that conversation because it’s an uncomfortable conversation. That is not fair to the employee, the manager or the team.

One employee recalled, with a smile, “I had been trying for years to try different areas within my organization. I felt I was an asset to the company and my skill set would be useful just about anywhere. The problem was I wasn’t finding the perfect match for me. Plus, I had been through about three different managers within a year, so none of them ever got a chance to help me. Finally, a new manager showed up and immediately began supporting my proposal for a job swap. In order to complete the job swap I had to pass two very difficult industry exams. My manager allowed me a few hours a week to study in the office, in a quiet area. She researched the company policy to find out that I would be allotted a day off to study. And at all of our one-on-one meetings she quizzed me. At first I thought she wanted me to leave, but then I realized she really wanted to do this for me because I really wanted it. When I passed the first exam, she
brought doughnuts in and hung signs congratulating me. I can't even explain the support I felt. I continued to work hard for her before I transitioned into my new role and I still go to her for advice in my new role. Now that's a manager who really wants to manage."

The example above illustrates a manager who has a genuine interest in her employees. Obviously managers with larger staffs cannot do such heartfelt things for every employee, however, recognition communicates a positive message to the entire team. Because the manager in the example above brought doughnuts in and hung signs, everyone in the department knew what the employee accomplished, as they should have known. This was a big step for the employee and a gracious act on the part of the manager.

**Key Findings IX – Manager Interviews**

The author conducted interviews with seven managers from The Block, Orange County, CA, Prudential Financial, Newark, NJ, and BlessingWhite, Skillman, NJ. The author's interview with each manager consisted of a conversational-style of interviewing. The author asked some general questions to get each manager to begin speaking of their role as a manager.

Each manager had the same basic comments regarding the biggest challenge they face on a daily basis – dealing with people. It may sound funny considering that the main focus of management is to deal with people, however, most managers noted that as the most challenging aspect of the job.

A second challenge to most managers was the “uncomfortable” conversation. Most people assume that employees are adults and they know right from wrong – unfortunately, that is not the case. One manager recalled a story of when he had to counsel two female staff members on sexual harassment. Another manager recalled having to fire a woman for sleeping with clients. Both of these managers said the key to holding a successful “uncomfortable” conversation is to
keep it simple, keep your sense of humor, know the legalities, listen to all sides, and respond objectively and non-biased. They both agreed that the sexual-related conversations were the hardest because you don’t expect to have to have those conversations in the workplace, especially with other adults.

All of the managers agreed that the most important skill to have is the ability to delegate and build teamwork and morale. Never ask an employee to do something you yourself would not do. One manager recalled a story of working in a restaurant/bar where a customer got sick in the bathroom. Someone had to clean it and the manager, along with his direct reports, picked straws to see who would get the job. This made the employees feel that their manager had the same shot at cleaning the mess as they did.

Other manager comments discussed how a leader should delegate by knowing her staff and who would be best at which task and being clear about expectations. It’s also important to remove any bad elements – “If you have a quart of sour milk and add fresh milk to it – you still have sour milk.”

Once again the interview portion of the author’s research reveals “communication” as the key skill for managers according to both employees and managers.

**Conclusion**

The key findings and interviews from this chapter have really exposed the truths behind what managers think and what employees think. Both have solid arguments for what they feel are the essential skills and both groups find the same skills most essential. Listening to employees and managers during their interviews and reading their comments on the survey, the author realized that today’s corporate environment is improving its management style. From the results of this
research it is clear that managers need to be more vigilant in practicing each skill and employees
need to be more active in their own individual development.

In Chapter Four, the author will detail each skill and provide some examples of how to
practice each skill. It is the author’s supposition that each and every skill is just as important as
the other. As we saw in this chapter, employees and managers have their top four or five,
however, all of the skills were recognized as “Very Important” or “Important”. Yes, it is difficult
to master 20 skills, but it is important to at least be aware of each skill and make an attempt to
master each skill.
CHAPTER 4: MANAGEMENT REQUISITES FOR PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP

**Essential Skills**

The skills a manager must possess are mostly paradoxical. Effective managers are both hard driving and participative, yet nurturing and competitive. They are able to be flexible and creative while also being controlled, stable, and rational. Many of the skills a manager has are interrelated and overlapping. Effective managers, therefore, develop a constellation of skills that overlap and support one another and that allow flexibility in managing diverse situations.

Management skills are linked to a more complex knowledge base than other types of skills, and they are inherently connected to interaction with other (frequently unpredictable) individuals. However, all of these skills have the potential for improvement through practice (Tepper, p. 12.)

This chapter details the statement above. Through the author’s research, she has determined that although all 20 skills listed in her survey are important, many overlap and most are based on the main communication skills. The following diagram illustrates the many tasks of a manager. The author goes into greater detail of each skill following the diagram below. The skills are listed in no order of importance or priority.
**Interpersonal Skills**

Interpersonal skills involve the ability of a manager to relate to her team members and those outside of the team to create a comfortable, successful working environment for all team members and partners. Interpersonal skills include mentoring and coaching abilities, basic listening qualities, along with a sense of compassion, the ability to resolve workplace conflict in a timely manner, a genuine interest in employees as people and individuals, and the ability to maintain respected working relationships with those outside of the team.

**Mentoring and Coaching**

Mentoring and coaching is one of the toughest aspects of a manager’s job. This responsibility involves inspiring and motivating an employee to perform at her best. Personality plays a large role in the success of this responsibility. If the relationship of the employee and the manager is strained due to personality conflicts, the task of mentoring is nearly impossible. As we learned in Chapter Two, everyone is motivated using different tactics for different situations. It is the manager’s responsibility to know the employee and learn what makes each employee tick.
Coaching can ease the process of acquiring new skills, increase motivation and commitment, and help people navigate the uncharted waters of their reshaped responsibilities. Directly asking a person what he or she needs to be successful actually makes better use of the manager’s limited time because it removes the guesswork. However, there are some employees who simply do not know what they need and they look to their manager for guidance. Without an interpersonal or respect-based connection, a manager is just telling people what to do. Coaching, on the other hand, is about bringing out the best in someone. Good coaches have a way of imparting their expertise while engaging a person’s motivation and talents. Once the connection is made, a wise coach gets out of the way and watches the results. It takes time and patience. It also takes resisting being too directive. A good coach functions as a sounding board allowing people to discover for themselves the solution. (BlessingWhite, October 2003.)

Listening

Being a good listener as a manager follows the same basic common sense techniques used for any listening situation. It is important to give your complete attention to an employee when they are speaking. Employees look to managers to not just hear them, but to listen to them and what it is they are actually saying or asking for. Simple listening techniques, such as, direct eye contact during dialogue, avoiding interruption or distraction when someone is speaking, summarize what the person has just said to assure the speaker of your understanding are all good techniques that a manager should use when listening to any employee.

Conflict Resolution

One of the meanings of management we discussed in Chapter Two talked about the need for management, as a practice, to prevent and cure trouble. Although the workplace is supposed to be full of adults who know how to work with others, many organizations often encounter
employees at all different levels of maturity. And sometimes personalities that do not work well
together can cause unwarranted conflict that a manager must resolve.

A manager needs to possess the skills necessary to resolve such conflicts so that the
organization can operate without delay. Some techniques for resolving conflict highlighted by
The Coaching & Mentoring Network (http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk) include:

- Listening to both sides of the story
- Investigating what really happened
- Talk to others who were directly and indirectly involved
- Document all findings
- Make an honest evaluation to both parties
- Express the need for both parties to put the incident behind them and start over

When working with internal partners and external clients, conflicts can easily arise due to
normal work pressures, personality differences, and deadline issues.

**Partnering**

Partnering goes hand-in-hand with conflict resolution. If a manager develops solid, working
relationships with internal partners, the road will be paved for easy resolution of any conflicts.
It is also important for a manager to show good politics and partnering so that his team can
mimic such behavior. If a manager criticizes peers or internal partners, direct reports will most
likely be turned off by such displays.

The manager has to integrate downwards with the work of the people who report to him/her.
The most important relation areas in which he/she has to integrate the work of his/her unit, if it is
to have any results, cut sideways—that is, with people over whom he has no control. So the best
way to identify those people within an organization who have management responsibility is not
command over people. It is the responsibility for contribution. Function rather than power has to be the distinctive criterion and the organizing principal (Drucker, p. 393.)

**Management Skills**

Management skills are those skills above and beyond the actual job function. Before any manager became a manager, he was just like those he manages – a worker doing the job. Of course, every manager should have the ability to do the job of those he is managing, but it goes further than that. Managers have to plan and set goals and objectives for their teams. They must have an inherent desire to develop each staff member to basically take their job. For the manager’s prior manager did just that – helped him rise to the next level of managing others.

Performance appraisals are a task everyone in an organization is familiar with, however, only managers know the hard work and time that goes into actually completing one. And of course, a manager must have the ability to train his staff, not only in the job at hand, but to further develop each team member to move ahead within the organization.

**Planning and Strategy**

Many employees are not privy to the extra-curricular responsibilities a manager has. For instance, setting goals for her team is a manager’s first priority. Without a plan and strategy for the team, any attempt at a congruous working environment will fail. Additionally, a manager needs to align her team’s strategy with that of the entire organization. Even more importantly, a manager must communicate the team’s strategy to the team in such a way as to make the team realize its contribution to the organization as a whole. The manager determines what the goals for each area of objectives should be and what has to be done to reach those objectives. She communicates those objectives to the people whose performance is needed to attain them.
The best way to plan and strategize is to include the team in the planning process. If the team is involved, each member will have a sense of ownership, which will likely motivate the team to perform at its best. Including the team will also make each member aware of the full realm of responsibilities a manager must have.

Obviously, short-term direction and planning for the following year must be provided to each employee. The employee should know what is expected of her as it relates to the department and the organization over the next year. These short-term goals should be measurable because the employee will be making sure she is meeting these goals throughout the year. (Lombardi, 304.)

Effective managers realize that a substantial portion of their time should be devoted to planning. Planning means the determination in advance of a personnel program. This is an attempt to head off trouble, to prevent as many problems as possible from arising. Planning involves the ability to think, to analyze, and to come to decisions (Drucker, p. 400.)

Once a course of action has been determined, an organization must be established to carry out the course of action. An organization is a means to an end. The manager must design the structure of relationships among jobs, personnel, and physical factors. She must be aware of the complex relationships that exist between his specialized unit and the rest of the organization. And now that there is a plan and an organization to execute the plan, getting people to go to work willingly and effectively is the final stage (Drucker, p. 400.)

**Staff Development**

As we learned in Chapter Two, each employee has an innate desire to develop, grow and achieve. This is why staff development is such an integral part of a manager's job. It is important to put measurements in place for each employee to ensure that development is happening. Each
individual needs his own measurement scale because, as we discussed in Chapter Two, each individual is at a different level with a different personality and tolerance for adaptation.

A manager should establish yardsticks and see to it that each employee has measurements available to him which are focused on the performance of the whole organization and which, at the same time, focus and interpret performance. He communicates the meaning of the measurements and their findings to his subordinates, superiors, and colleagues (Flippo, p. 3.)

Once the personnel functions, such as planning, coaching, training and communication are being performed, management's duty at this point is now that of control — the observation and comparison of action with plans and the correction of any deviations that may occur, or, at times, the realignment of plans and their adjustment to unchangeable deviations. Regulating activities in accordance with the personnel plan, which in turn was formulated on the basis of an analysis of fundamental organization goals or objectives (Flippo, p. 3.)

Once the manager analyzes the activities, decisions, and relations needed, he classifies the work. He divides it into manageable activities and further divides the activities into manageable jobs. He selects workers for the management of these units and for the jobs (Drucker, p. 400.)

Workers are selected based on developmental opportunities, strengths and weaknesses. A manager should know each employee's talents and developmental needs. In order to truly develop each employee, the manager must be willing to delegate and almost allow employees to fail at tasks that may not be their strengths as this is an effective way for employees to learn new responsibilities and develop within the department and organization.

**Policies, Procedures, Administration**

Somewhat in line with planning and strategizing is the administrative end of management. Keeping track of vacation and sick time, documenting employee behavior (good and bad),
conducting performance evaluations, setting team procedures, and keeping senior management abreast of the team's progress is all included in the administrative responsibilities of a manager. This is another area most employees overlook. Again, including the team in the process is helpful. Asking for each team member's input on procedures is imperative. Employees need to feel included in developing the process for their job, and who better to ask then those who actually perform the task? As far as documentation and performance evaluations, these are tasks that only the manager can perform for obvious reasons.

A systematic performance appraisal of hired personnel is necessary at some regularly scheduled point in a person's career. "A systematic, periodic, and so far as humanly possible, an impartial rating of an employee's excellence in matters pertaining to his present job."

(Lytle, p. 328.)

The first and basic value of systematic performance appraisals is that it provides information of great assistance in making and enforcing decisions about such subjects as promotions, pay increases, layoffs and transfers. It provides this information in advance of the time when it may be needed, thereby avoiding spot judgments when a decision must be made. A second value of the systematic performance appraisal is that it serves to stimulate and guide employee development. Most people like to know how they are doing (Lombardi, p. 288.)

The performance appraisal should include space for goal setting – an individual development plan (IDP), which is completed by both employee and manager during the performance appraisal. Prior to the appraisal meeting, the employee should complete an IDP for himself and the manager completes an IDP for the employee. At the meeting, both IDPs are compared and meshed together to provide the employee with goals for the upcoming year. Goals provide the manager and employee with a clear idea of what is expected over the next year and ease the
manager’s job in terms of comparing the achievement of these goals against the employee’s actual performance (Lombardi, p. 296.)

The author spent considerable time discussing performance appraisals because they are the one tool that allows employees and managers to truly provide constructive feedback to each other. Because the performance evaluation is an ongoing process and individualized, so as not to compare one employee’s skills to those of another, it needs to be given the utmost care and thought. The author learned through her research that there are many organizations or departments within organizations that do not hold the performance evaluation in a positive light. They do not conduct evaluations of their employees because they feel these evaluations are nonsense and simply procedural red tape that adds more work to their already heavy workload. What these managers don’t see is that the performance appraisal should be used as an opportunity to motivate the employee and provide a long-term employee development plan. The manager can also tell the employee which skills and talents the employee has and what they can be used for in the future. Nobody enjoys criticism, but in reality, most people (according to our theories from Chapter Two) strive to accomplish and succeed. If, for example, an employee is missing the mark because of something that can be discussed and worked out during a performance appraisal, then a manager should use it as a key opportunity to develop his staff. In the end, that employee will not produce satisfactorily for the manager or the organization, and, in turn, that will affect the manager’s performance.

Along with performance appraisals comes performance documentation. It is imperative for managers to consistently keep track of each employee by keeping notes of specific behavior on each employee. The documentation must not be too broad – it must provide the employee with specific examples of behaviors, such as, “has a bad attitude” should be documented using a more
specific example, such as, "Charles displayed a bad attitude by shrugging his shoulders and shaking his head throughout the entire presentation."

**Training and Development**

This is an easy task for managers as long as the organization allows for education. Everyone loves to get out of the office from time to time. Sending an employee on a two-day, off-site training session will only re-energize the employee and make her feel important to the organization.

In addition to off-site, outsourced training, managers should have the ability to train and develop their employees. This can be done through one-on-one meetings, individual development planning, which is usually part of performance evaluation, and/or micro-management. The IDP will help a manager establish a group-training program. If several team members are in need of development in a certain area, the manager now has a training program to create for the entire team. Mentoring and delegation are also tools that can be used for training and development. It is important for a manager to be able to "let go" and almost let the employee fail in order to learn.

Also, training can be used to reward and recognize superstar employees. If several steadies on the team are struggling in a certain area of the job, a superstar employee can train those steadies in the function. This will ensure that each team member is performing the task to the manager’s satisfaction, since a superstar employee trained them. This will also provide the superstar employee with a sense of recognition, while providing a new development opportunity for the superstar employee.
Leadership Skills

Leadership skills are a hot topic today. Consultants are finding plenty of work as executive coaches and leadership gurus in today’s corporate environment. Leaders, such as John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Huey Long shared some of the same leadership qualities, such as, communicator, visionary, energizer, innovator, planner and presenter. The list of leadership qualities is a long one and very few possess each quality. However, a manager who at least strives to possess most or all leadership qualities is a true leader. For the purposes of this thesis, the leadership skills included are ability to motivate, strategize, make decisions, delegate and handle office politics.

Ability to Motivate

The ability to motivate employees is probably the most difficult task a manager has. As we read in Chapter Two, most people want to succeed. However, Freud may have had some valid points in his theory. That is there are many lazy people in the workforce who are more than capable of handling their job. However, they choose to remain a steady employee. Managers probably could use some sort of psychological training to know how to motivate employees. Perhaps managers need to get to know each employee as an individual, then motivate from there.

In order to motivate and inspire employees, a manager must establish a creative work environment that fosters energy and creative thinking. The only way to achieve such an open and creative work environment is to let team members know that their creative thought will be valued and rewarded (Lombardi, p. 234.) A manager can establish a creative work environment by identifying individuals among her superstar and steady employees who will be helpful in establishing the proper climate for creativity. A manager can stimulate innovation by playing to individual strengths, asking questions, and involving her team (Lombardi, p. 235.)
Delegation/Decision-Making

In considering Chapter Two and our discussion of how management is about leading and not controlling, the need to discuss delegation becomes paramount. Managers must learn to trust their employees to work autonomously. However, it is important for the manager to provide clear direction before expecting a satisfactory performance.

The author has heard many managers talk about how it is easier to just do the job themselves because by the time they explain it to an employee, the job could have been done. As true as this may be, it is unfair to the employee and the manager. Obviously the manager knows how to perform the task at hand, now it is the manager’s job to share that knowledge and watch her employees grow.

Some delegation guidelines include identifying delegatable assignments, selecting the appropriate delegatee, assigning the delegated task, and using a follow-up strategy (Lombardi, p. 377.) The follow up is especially important since it will help the employee feel secure in her new task knowing that her manager will check in to make sure things are going smoothly. Many managers have a hard time delegating tasks out of insecurity or distrust of employees’ ability. Nonetheless, it is important if the manager’s team, as a whole, will grow and develop.

Politics

A manager will likely be in a more high-profile position than his direct reports. This is part of the prestige of being on the management team. A manager must be well poised in dealing with senior management as well as lower management. Diplomacy plays a large role in how a manager succeeds in an organization.

“These problems of upward relations that worry the manager — the relationship to his own boss; his doubts as to what is expected of him; his difficulty in getting his point across, his
program accepted, his activity given full weight; the relations with other departments and with staff people, and so forth – are all problems of managing managers. Yet, managers everywhere tell each other to give top priority to the responsibility of managing the people under them.” (Drucker, p. 380.)

Politics is a common bureaucratic task all employees and managers have to learn. Very rarely do people discuss the actual politics that occur in corporate America. Most people just simply refer to certain tasks as “political.” It would be more beneficial for all members involved if they would discuss the details of the political structure of the organization rather than hide behind it.

**Communication Skills**

Communication skills seem apparent to most people. But what people don’t realize is that communication covers a wide range of skills. Communication is not only the ability to speak to employees, but it is the ability to speak clearly and ensure an understanding of what has been communicated. Proper communication also includes knowing when to communicate certain messages and how to adapt the communication message for certain groups or individuals. Communication can also be accomplished through written communication, such as e-mail or memos, oral communication, such as presentations or meetings. Communication should also be two-way. Not only should a manager communicate to employees, but employees should feel comfortable communicating to their manager.

**Communication**

Clear and direct communication is one of the toughest skills for many people. Even more so, a manager has to control sensitivity and biases. A manager should never be so blunt with an employee that the employee is compelled to go to human resources to register a complaint regarding mistreatment. Yet, a manager needs to be direct so that the employee gets the message.
Middle managers have always been charged with keeping their employees informed of direction and priorities. Now, they are expected to “connect the dots” in linking strategy to the work that needs to be done. By communicating the “why” behind the “what” of assignments, middle managers are strengthening team commitment while ensuring that the projects they lead are aligned with strategic direction (BlessingWhite, October 2003.)

The manager makes a team out of the people that are responsible for various jobs. He does that through the practices with which he works. He does it through is “people decisions” on pay, placement, and promotion. And he does it through constant communication to and from his subordinates and to and from his superior and to and from his colleagues (Drucker, p. 400.)

**Meetings**

Some teams require more frequent meetings than other teams. Irregardless, one-on-one meetings are imperative, whether they occur daily, weekly, or monthly. Employees need to feel that their manager is in tune with them and who they are. It is also good practice for a manager to get a sense for an employee’s job satisfaction. This can be achieved through one-on-one meetings. Besides, how can a manager truly develop an employee with whom she never meets?

Having consistent group meetings will cause team members to resolve any conflict. It is also important for team members to get to know each other and to learn what each other is working on. Additionally, members can learn different skills from each other. Furthermore, group meetings are wonderful for team dynamics, because they create a sense of camaraderie amongst team members.

The premise for most meetings should be the furtherance of team learning. In order to hold an effective team meeting, three elements must be present:

1. All participants must suspend their assumptions
2. All participants must regard one another as colleagues

3. There must be a facilitator who holds the context of the dialogue (the manager)

Such conditions allow for a free flow of meaning to circulate the entire group by diminishing the resistance to the flow. It is important to assign an owner to any issues discussed at the meeting that were not resolved. And the group should together create a timeline for delivery of any unfinished issues. This allows each team member to contribute to the meeting and feel a part of the process (Harrison, - www.altika.com/leadership/Meeting).

It is also helpful to provide team members with an agenda of each meeting, even if they are weekly meetings. This helps the manager keep the meeting organized and avoid missing any pertinent information to share with the team. The manager should always allow time at the end of the meeting for each team member to raise any issues or concerns. Obviously, if a team member has an issue that cannot be shared with the group, the employee can share those concerns during his one-on-one with his manager.

Feedback

Feedback from peers and internal partners is necessary for the development of employees. During performance appraisal time, partners, peers and team members should be allotted space and time to provide constructive feedback. “Limit peer input to the employee’s cooperation, relations with her peers in your colleague’s department, and the employee’s technical proficiency in solving problems and providing positive outcomes.” (Lombardi, p. 297.)

Additionally, in this season of annual performance appraisals, managers who want candid feedback on how well they motivate, inspire and communicate with others, and set and meet goals, are turning to employees. The so-called 360-degree performance review implemented at many companies formalizes this practice by requiring bosses, peers and employees to review one
another. The peer reviews have been controversial, with employees saying rivals unfairly target
them. Employees tend to be more thoughtful and fair when assessing their bosses, especially
where the bosses are open to constructive criticism. Still, staffers usually submit
their appraisals anonymously so they don’t have to worry about retribution (Hymowitz,
November 2003.)

Feedback refers to upward feedback to the manager as well as providing the employee with
positive and negative feedback received from others within the company, such as partners or
other team members. The most important aspect of feedback is to be sure it is communicated
positively with a desired result of improvement not resentment.

**Conclusion**

In Chapter Four, the essential skills a manager needs to have in order to be successful in
today’s corporate environment were revealed. There are many skills, but many of them work
together. For instance, providing feedback is part of performance evaluations and
communication is involved in every skill from delegating to partnering. In the next and final
chapter of this thesis, the author will consolidate these skills to illustrate how they all work
together. The author will also highlight the main points of this research to help managers and
employees understand the necessity of management and how successful management is best
achieved, not only from the persistence of the manager, but with help of the employee as well.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

After reading the skills addressed in the previous chapter, management might seem like an impossible function to master. As training consultants from BlessingWhite state, “Relationship skills involve communicating and connecting with people. Such skills are becoming more important for middle managers as they move into a more strategic role. In managing “up” they need to effectively pull from senior leaders the hows and whys embedded in the strategic direction and give feedback. In managing “down” they need to lead, coach and develop their team members in ways that help each individual employee connect with the organization’s direction and contribute his or her best toward it.” BlessingWhite’s statement makes the task seem even harder. As important as it is for managers to allow for growth and development of their staff, they must allow for their own growth and development as well. It may even help for managers to keep their expectations low, but their standards high.

It may also be easier if managers remember that not all people within an organization want to advance, so not all people fall into any one of the theories discussed in Chapter Two. Vroom’s theory, which states that managers need to adapt their style to each individual and each situation, makes the most sense because as we looked at each skill in Chapter Four, they are important, yet adaptable to each employee.

A manager’s job would be simple if each employee was self-motivated and success-driven. But then those managers who need a sense of accomplishment would be unchallenged by such a sophisticated, self-sufficient staff.

The author has encountered very few managers who have even half of the skills we discussed in Chapter Four. Most managers really excel at some and completely lack in others. The reality is
that most employees expect managers to envelop each skill to the highest degree of quality, and that is unfair. Managers must remember all of these skills and work on each one each day until they all become second nature.

There is precedence for the author’s findings according to Whetton and Cameron who list the most frequently cited skills of effective managers below:

1. Verbal communication (including listening)
2. Managing time and stress
3. Managing individual decisions
4. Recognizing, defining, and solving problems
5. Motivating and influencing others
6. Delegating
7. Setting goals and articulating a vision
8. Self-awareness
9. Team building
10. Managing conflict (p. 8.)

These are many of the same skills the author has detailed in Chapter Four. Therefore, it is apparent what skills are necessary to lead others. Unfortunately, it is not so apparent how to put those skills to practice. Again, it is the author’s belief that managers must practice each skill each day until they are all inbred in their everyday rituals. It is also helpful if the manager’s manager is a true leader who holds her staff to these skills and qualities. We can only start with what we have, so as long as the new generation of managers is as slated and driven as this author to make improvements in the world of management, then we’ll have true leaders from here on out.
The practicum discussed in Chapter Four works well because many of the skills overlap. It is clear from the author’s research that communication is the number one skill essential to a manager’s success. Without communication, none of the other skills are possible. If a manager lacks this skill, there are many books, videos and seminars to teach managers how to communicate effectively.

Communication includes written and oral. All too often, managers send out poorly written e-mails. This practice sends a terrible message to employees and it allows employees to develop using similarly poor writing styles. Management cannot take for granted that their every step is being scrutinized by their employees, therefore, they must take great care in written communication as much as oral communication.

As discerned in Chapter Two, managers cannot use a one-size-fits-all approach because everyone is an individual and is motivated using different tactics. Many people may be motivated by self-actualization, but everyone’s self-actualization is different. The theorists the author highlighted in Chapter Two were not so far off from meeting the needs of today’s employees and managers. Managing people requires (if not a detailed understanding) a very basic knowledge of the human psyche and how it works. The world has changed drastically since the introduction of the theories discussed in Chapter Two, however, people remain people with needs. The theories discussed in Chapter Two reveal how to meet those needs to spark motivation and achievement.

There is no doubt that employees expect too much from managers. They generally expect them to be counselors, friends, leaders and mentors. Managers expect themselves to be all that as well. However, both employees and managers need to maintain a realistic perspective of what is possible. Managers need to draw a line between mentoring and counseling. The bottom line is
that both employees and managers have a job to do and that needs to take precedence over
developing friendships. Most managers understand the need for this line, employees need to
understand it better and begin taking responsibility and accountability for their own growth and
development. An educated, goal-oriented employee is a happier employee because she is easier
to manage and provides a greater sense of achievement for her manager.

Some people are natural leaders and understand that managing is about leading people, not
controlling them. When people hear the word leader they instantly think of the CEO, president or
executive. A manager is also a leader because he is leading a team, no matter how large or small.
The manager certainly manages his department – that is, the tasks that he is ultimately
responsible for, but the people he leads actually complete these tasks.

Managers need to begin thinking of themselves as leaders leading people, rather than
managers managing tasks.

If managers are truly dedicated to developing staff then it is their responsibility to groom
their employees for the next level, which is most likely the manager’s job. A true leader is not
fearful of this because a good leader will be developing into her next level, therefore making
room for her superstar employee.

Employees need to be made aware of all of the tasks a manager is responsible for, especially
working managers. Many employees feel their manager doesn’t do much, yet most managers
know that is not the case. Making employees aware of what you are working on will hopefully
heighten their interest in moving into such a role and it will also make them aware of just how
busy you are.

Most people quit their jobs because of their relationship with their manager. If the lines of
communication are open, this should never be the case. An employee should feel comfortable
talking over tensions with his manager. Obviously there are some instances where personalities will clash, but if a manager does not allow such personality conflicts to bias her opinion of that employee as a worker, then there should be no tension in the work place.

Finally, today’s workforce is much more educated and sophisticated than it was when the management boom began in the 1960s. As much as this is a positive step for employees and corporate America, it also created a challenging step for managers. Employees are more motivated and want to advance, whereas past generations wanted nothing more than a guaranteed paycheck. In those days, managing meant exactly that because there was no need to lead a team that did not want to be led anywhere. Management today involves some challenging responsibilities for managers. But managers who really want to manage out of a genuine confidence in their ability to do so because they truly want to develop others will be successful. And managers who really want to manage others should be aware of all of the skills discussed in this thesis, for these are the skills that both managers and employees find the most essential to a successful career in management.

It is the author’s hope that she has clearly defined each essential management skill while creating some excitement around the tasks involved with managing others. It is the author’s belief that managing others is like no other business experience. It is rewarding some of the time, frustrating most of the time, and challenging all of the time. But there are few things in business that are as rewarding as leading a successful team of talented, well-rounded professionals.
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