The First Time Manager

How do I . . .

Determine roles and responsibilities?
Match talent to task?
Provide focus and direction?
Coach for performance?

The Human Side of Management
A Work in Progress

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## About the Author
Introduction:

This series is written for the newly appointed supervisor or manager. Its focus is on the “human side” of management, and it is designed for those who believe it is their responsibility to CREATE, NURTURE, AND MAINTAIN AN ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE WHERE PEOPLE CAN BE SUCCESSFUL IN APPLYING THEIR TALENTS AND GIFTS TO THEIR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES – taking what you can do well and what you like to do and turning it into your career.

Two major objectives guided the writing of this series: 1) to keep the contents brief, simple, and to the point – in our fast paced world, the more brief and to the point, the better – and 2) to challenge readers to think carefully about the ideas discussed, to determine the relevancy of these ideas for their own particular situation, and to apply the principles on the job. Ample space is provided in the margins and on most pages to urge the reader to add notes, expand upon concepts discussed in the text, jot down thoughts and opinions about the material presented. Readers are encouraged to make journal entries about what they have learned through job application and to continue to refer to these notes over time. The READER is in full control of the learning process.

This book, in combination with the reader’s notes, is to be considered a “work in progress.” It is an evolving journey of thought, reflection, cognition, confirmation, modification, and ultimately, if appropriate, an on the job application. It should be first read, then more carefully studied, and frequently referred to thereafter once the reader has contributed his/her own notes.

Four Items are included in this series on THE HUMAN SIDE OF MANAGEMENT:

- Management Roles and Responsibilities
- Providing Focus and Direction for Others
- Matching Talents to Tasks
- Coaching for Performance Enhancement

None of the themes claims to illuminate previously undiscovered aspects of managing employees; indeed, many of the concepts and principles discussed should already be familiar to the reader. In actuality, this book is what the authors of WORKFORCE 2020 would term as an “of course” book. Readers should be able to say, “Of course I’m aware of this concept or that principle.” This work in progress is designed to present the already known information in new ways that challenge perspectives and stimulate readers to think in new directions.

Readers who take the time to complete the activity worksheets in the book, as well as record personal on-the-job experiences, will find the process both rewarding and insightful; a process that just may inspire, motivate and encourage during the ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ of the new role of manager.
Theme One:
Management Roles and Responsibilities

The First Time Manager

Mark Twain once quoted a man being tarred, feathered, and run out of town as saying, “If it wasn’t for the honor of it all, I would have rather left town some other way.” This may be the sentiments of many first time managers when they realize the true nature of the manager’s job in today’s society; consider some of the challenges a new manager faces:

• Assume a new role from that of an employee that requires different behaviors on and off the job.
• Work under a brighter spotlight of increased expectations and scrutiny.
• Accept responsibility for the quality and quantity of the work of others.
• Learn to quickly utilize a variety of leadership, interpersonal, and teamwork skills to accomplish work with and through others.
• Administer company policies in a fair manner and adhere to government regulations.
• Become comfortable balancing the demands of those who want tasks done with the wants and needs of those who get the tasks done.
• Be self motivated, deal effectively with stress and frustration, and set a positive example for others to follow.

Obviously, if an individual is offered a management position, there must be some evaluated reason for this promotion. And if the individual accepts the opportunity, then there must be some belief that he/she can adequately perform the job.
Consider these events:

“John, you have been with the company for nearly ten years, and in that time you have demonstrated outstanding technical skills. In fact, you have been an “A” level electrician for the past six years. Effective Monday, we are appointing you Maintenance Supervisor – Electrical Craft. Congratulations!”

“Sally, an opening has occurred in the Accounts Payable department and we want you to take over as Manager of that function. Your work habits are commendable and you should have no trouble getting the department’s productivity up to where it should be.”

“Arthur, you have performed satisfactorily as a supervisor for over a year. We would like for you to take the Branch Manager’s position and supervise two supervisors, an office staff, and an outside salesperson. Any questions?”

What criteria were considered in the promotions of John, Sally, and Arthur? How will these assets contribute to their success in their new positions?

Why do you think you were offered your new position?
Understanding Your New Responsibilities

Conceptually, every individual in an organization has responsibilities to fulfill – those of which translate into tasks and activities, as well as end results. An important factor to note here is that employees – whether entry level or experienced – are evaluated on the basis of their INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION toward the fulfillment of their responsibilities; what they INDIVIDUALLY produce, create, or impact.

On the other hand, supervisors, managers, and executives are evaluated on the basis of the performance, output, results, or profits of the group, department, or company for which they are responsible. They also have responsibilities which include goals, objectives, and performance results. Supervisors, managers, and executives must be concerned about the COLLECTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS of their respective group, department, or company rather than individual performance.

As an example, an individual employee is responsible for on time attendance. A supervisor is responsible for ensuring that all members are on time to work. A manager is responsible for ensuring that systems are in place to attract and retain competent employees. An executive is responsible for creating wealth in an organization so that competitive compensation and benefits can be provided for deserving employees. All of these responsibilities are interconnected, but you can see how vastly different the focuses are from the various positions within an organization. Being responsible for the actions of others can be challenging, but can also prove to be rewarding.

Moreover, it is not unusual for a new supervisor or manager to have a difficult time making the transition from an employee point of view to a company point of view. What may seem like a logical decision from an employee’s point of view can take on an entirely different dimension from a company’s point of view.

“*My first month as a department manager taught me that there are many factors to consider when hiring a new employee. We had an opening, and my best friend from high school (Bill) had recently been discharged from the Navy. I knew he was from a good family and had always been considered a hard worker. He was just the type of employee that I needed on my crew. Although he did not meet all of the qualifications of the job, I thought that his other characteristics more than offset this deficiency. One night at the ball game, I all but promised the job if he would apply. He did apply, but was told by Human Resources that he did not have the minimum qualifications posted for the position.”*

Decisions which looked straightforward and simple from an employee point of view may turn out to be quite complex from a managerial point of view. Understanding one’s responsibilities and the broad obligations they impose is an ongoing process of learning. The potentially adverse consequences that result from a present decision must be evaluated no matter how uncomplicated the current situation appears to be.
Major Skill Sets Required by Organizations

Figure 1 represents a conceptual model of the relative distribution of the four major skill sets identified as Managerial, Technical, Teamwork, and Interpersonal. These four major skill sets are distributed across the five position levels labeled as Entry Level Employee, Experienced Employee, First Line Supervisor, Middle Management, and Top Management.

For our purposes, **MANAGERIAL SKILLS** will be defined as those skills needed to effectively ask and answer the following key questions: What needs to be done? (Planning) How should it be done? (Organizing) Who should do it? (Implementing) Was it done correctly? (Evaluating). [Refer to Figure 2 for a breakdown of these four functions of management.] Figure 1 is drawn to emphasize that some degree of these Managerial Skills is required in all of the five position levels, but that they become more important (relatively speaking) as one moves from an employee position to a supervisory/management position.

**Figure 1**

Relative Distribution of Four Major Skill Sets by Position Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Management</th>
<th>Managerial Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle Management</td>
<td>Technical Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Line Supervisor</td>
<td>Teamwork Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Employee</td>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry Level Employee</td>
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</table>

**TECHNICAL SKILLS** encompass the knowledge and abilities required to perform a specific job. For instance, financial knowledge and ability is required for an accountant, manufacturing knowledge and ability is required for a welder, and science and math knowledge and ability is required for an engineer. In Figure 1, technical skills are shown as an important skill set at all position levels, but comprise the major component for both entry level and experienced employees. When hiring an entry level employee or evaluating the performance of an experienced employee, technical skills are usually considered the most important.
**TEAMWORK SKILLS** are those skills needed for a group effort to be effective. Clarification of issues, mediation of differences, balanced participation, creation of shared goals, team problem solving, and the ability to reach a consensus are just a few examples. These skills are thought to be needed at all levels of the organization and become more developed the longer a person has an opportunity to work in a team environment. Entry level employees might be expected to perform primarily as a team member, while more experienced employees and first line supervisors might be expected to assume the role of a team leader. Middle and top managers may be expected to display skills in deciding when a team based approach is appropriate and which characteristics to consider in selecting a team leader.

**INTERPERSONAL SKILLS** are comprised of effective listening, articulation of one’s position, coping with job stress, dealing with difficult people, and having insight into how to improve one’s interpersonal effectiveness. Interpersonal Skills are needed at all levels of an organization. As one moves up in an organization, the amount of interactions with other company employees increases, and with that comes the responsibility to cope with stress, to deal with a variety of situations and tasks simultaneously, and to optimize goals. These skills tend to become more and more important to one’s job success.

Graphically, Figure 1 stresses the relative emergence of Managerial Skills over Technical Skills as one moves upward from a first line supervisory position to a top management position. The relative decrease in Technical Skills does not imply that these skills are not important to success or that they have been forgotten; rather, it means that for some positions, the Managerial Skills take on a more prominent role and that “managers” must acquire, refine, and utilize these Managerial Skills to effectively execute their managerial responsibilities.

This emergence of the Managerial skills taking precedence over technical skills is an important component of a manager’s success. Many first time managers are promoted based on their technical skills; it is crucial to recognize the need to develop and fully utilize their managerial skills.

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**What percentage of your time is devoted to the four major skills?**

Managerial: 

Technical: 

Teamwork: 

Interpersonal: 

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Management Functions

Figure 2 focuses on an aspect of Figure 1 and graphically emphasizes the relative distribution of the four managerial functions across three levels of management. This conceptual model is quite flexible in its use; it can be used to demonstrate the concepts for an entire company, a single plant, or even a specific department or function.

For company-wide illustrations, the top management category would usually refer to the senior management team – president and vice president, middle management would refer to the functional heads who report to the vice presidents, and first line management would refer to those individuals who directly supervise hourly employees. (In some larger organizations, one may find it necessary to have two “middle” management categories.)

If Figure 2 is used to demonstrate the department level, the top management position would refer to the department head, the middle management position would refer to the superintendent level, and the first line position to first line supervisors.

The significance of Figure 2 lies in its attempt to distinguish how the percentages of time and energy devoted to these four management functions fluctuates with the various levels of management. While important at all levels of management, “planning” should consume more of a top manager’s time and energy than that of a first line supervisor. Also, the type of planning performed by top managers is usually more global in nature and more long term in focus. Similar comparisons can be made for other managerial functions.
Questions to think about . . .

How does someone acquire and refine managerial skills?

How is managing people different from managing a department or a function?

Which level of management should be managing for the future?

What happens if a manager spends too much time implementing and not enough time planning and evaluating?
Supervisory and Managerial Roles

Webster’s New World Dictionary defines the word “role” as “a part, or character, assumed by an actor in a play”. Each different “actor in a play” has a specific role designed for their individual character that they are responsible for acting out. In organizations, people are asked to assume various roles given their respective positions. In plays, actors are usually given their roles in the form of a script, and they utilize their acting talent to develop their character. In organizations, employees are usually given their responsibilities in the form of a job description, and they utilize their understanding of these obligations to develop the role they are expected to “play” in the organization.

Scripts and roles assumed by actors tend to be more specific and clearer than the roles and responsibilities set out in most organizations. Plays can’t be successful if actor roles are not understood and performed; likewise, organizations can’t be successful if employee and management roles are not understood and properly performed.

The first thing someone may notice about role differences in organizations is that employee roles are vastly different from those of individuals in supervisory or management positions. Sometimes a supervisor or manager will continue to perform under a former role even though their new role (and responsibilities) calls for different behaviors.

“The first six months as Manager of the Engineering Division I thought my role was to be the most knowledgeable Electrical Engineer in the Division and that my responsibilities were to personally oversee all engineering activities and to be fully aware of the status of all projects at all times. It soon became evident that there was not enough time in the day to do this. During a responsibility clarification session with my VP, I came to understand that I was to build a knowledgeable, effective, and responsive engineering function and that my role was to provide leadership, guidance, encouragement, and support to my four supervisors. It was quite a shock to realize that my Electrical Engineering expertise, my hands on approach to work, and my attention to details were factors in my being promoted to the manager position, but none of these – by themselves – were sufficient to assure that I could be successful in the job.”

In most supervisory and management positions, technical knowledge is necessary, but not a sufficient component of job success.
The transition from employee to first line supervisor can be a difficult one for most people. If an employee has been with an organization for some time and then is promoted into a supervisory position, a number of adjustments may need to be made.

First of all, the supervisor’s role calls for fairness, objectivity, and the absence of favoritism. The supervisor’s employees (former peers), however, may have expectations that they will be given special breaks or treated in a preferential manner. Employees who are primarily interested in their own pay check, their own work schedule, and their own vacation time, may find it difficult to identify with the supervisor’s viewpoint that, by definition, must include the needs of an entire group of employees, the department, and the company. Individual employees, of course, are aware of these other factors, but are not necessarily held responsible for them as is the supervisor.

Secondly, it has been suggested that supervisors and managers have three hats to wear in their role. One hat covers the responsibilities of their immediate group of employees. Another hat covers the responsibilities of their department or function. The third hat covers the responsibilities and concerns of the company in general. When making decisions, the prudent supervisor will consider the impact on the immediate group of employees, the implications for the department or function, and the consequences for the company.

It takes time to develop the organizational experience to learn all of the right questions to ask and all of the right factors to consider when making a decision. New managers/supervisors need to remember that every decision has potential implications beyond the immediate group of employees. One must be careful not to establish inappropriate precedents for the department or to put the company at risk by making decisions that do not consider the bigger picture.

“Our organization traditionally has given Thanksgiving and the Friday after Thanksgiving as holidays. My department, Purchasing, had caught up on their work, so I told the six hourly paid Purchasing Clerks they could leave at noon on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving if they wanted. It was my intention to pay them for the first hours not worked, but nothing was mentioned at the time. When their next paycheck was short by four hours of pay, they all confronted me for an explanation. After checking with the Accounting department, I discovered that I was not authorized to pay an hourly paid employee for the hours they didn’t work. Furthermore, I was informed that several of my peer managers had received a lot of complaints of unfairness that Wednesday from some of their employees because of my actions.”
Newly appointed supervisors who strive to maintain their close personal friendships with their former peers and now employees will soon discover that they may become the subject of criticism. The best a supervisor can hope for is to be respected. To strive to be liked by everyone is bound to result in personal unhappiness.

Fairly quickly, new supervisors come to learn that adjustments have to be made in both their work and personal lives. Socializing with the employees—as an equal buddy—complicates the supervisor-employee relationship while on the job. Married supervisors whose spouses are “best friends” with employees’ spouses can also complicate this relationship. In smaller communities, there may be numerous school, church, and civic club ties that unite employees, their spouses, and their children. The decision to maintain or to lessen these bonds of friendship is a difficult one to make.

“Our son played soccer for two seasons prior to my being assigned as manager of security. Jim, one of our security officers, was the team’s coach. One day at work I called Jim into my office to speak to him about his tendency to clock in fifteen or twenty minutes late on the mornings following games. Since then, my son has been benched with no explanation to him by the coach.”
Limits of Authority

Responsibility is defined as “an obligation to perform a function,” while authority can be defined as “the right to perform a function. Many first line supervisors and quite a few middle managers complain that they have more than enough responsibility but inadequate authority to get their job done. To some extent, this may be true.

Typically, supervisors and managers have defined, but limited, authority in many areas. For instance, they may be responsible for staffing a position, but they may only have recommending authority when it comes to the actual hiring decision. Likewise, they may only have recommending authority when it comes to promotions and salary increases. Usually, promotions and salary increases follow a rather structured procedure and may involve the “approval” of other managers in the same line of authority as well as the support of the Human Resources department.

At other times, the supervisor or manager has “full” authority to make a decision, but the company prefers that others in the organization be consulted for their advice before the decision is actually made. Even though the decision belongs to the supervisor, this mandate to “consult” with others is seen as unnecessary interference on their authority.

From the company’s point of view, this consultation step is seen as a way to give the decision maker the benefit of the wisdom and experience of others who may have made a similar decision in the past. Nearly all the decision makers can benefit from the experience of others.

Again, the concept of the three hats must be considered. No decision is made in isolation. All decisions, in some manner, have the potential to impact other portions of the organization. Newly appointed supervisors and managers are often reminded to “look beyond” their immediate situation and to consider the potential impact their decisions may have on others. None of us want to be restricted in our decisions because of an unknown precedent made in another area of the organization.

In addition to a company’s Human Resources policies and procedures, there are a number of regulations and laws that supervisors and managers must be knowledgeable of in order to effectively perform their job. These regulations and laws impose a set of compliance responsibilities as well as provide guidelines that can be useful in administering them.

“I was amazed at how many policies and regulations I had to consider when making employee related decisions. First, there were policies regarding attendance, performance, and discipline. Then, there were guidelines covering discrimination, substance abuse in the workplace, privacy issues, disabilities, and family medical leave that had to be considered. Sometimes, after all of this consideration, I felt like I had very limited authority but all of the responsibility!”
By now you may be wondering if being a supervisor or manager is really a “promotion”. On the surface the position looks desirable, but once submerged in the details it tends to lose some of its luster. If you have second thoughts, you are not alone. Making the transition from an individual contributor to a position where you are responsible for the performance of a group of people is not easy, nor does the transition occur overnight.

If you are experiencing some anxiety, you should know that it is a normal emotional experience for a transition. Transitions, by definition, involve letting go and taking hold. Letting go of the behaviors, attitudes, and skill sets of an employee and taking hold of the behaviors, attitudes, and skill sets of a supervisor or manager can be scary. Remember, you probably have had years of experience being an individual contributing employee; you knew your role and responsibilities, and you felt comfortable.

In time, you will gain sufficient experience as a supervisor or manager and feel comfortable in this new position, just like your old one. In time, your understanding of your new role and responsibilities will increase and you will have the same confidence as a supervisor or manager that you had as an experienced employee – but it will take time, effort, and a lot of energy on your part.

The difficult part is realizing that – in a transition – you must let go. This will allow room for taking on your new duties. You can’t effectively embrace your managerial role and responsibilities without relinquishing your employee role and responsibilities. In transition, you may feel that you have let go of the “old ways,” but are suspended in mid air before you have a sufficient grip on the “new ways.”

The “old ways” represent security, comfortableness, and known quantities. The “new ways” represent insecurity, discomfort, and unknown quantities. Logic dictates that we do not give up the old entirely before grasping the new. The transition from individual contributor to supervisor dictates that we can’t take on the new without making room for it. That means letting go of the old.

“My first six months as the manager of the new unit was a disaster. We had two recordable injuries in one week and an unintended environmental violation that caused the corporate staff to initiate an incident investigation that seemed totally focused on me personally. Each event was outside my control, yet I was held responsible. ‘It comes with the job,’ I was told. I felt very alone, uncertain, insecure, and uncomfortable.”
The Challenges of Technological Change

Most of us are initially threatened by change, especially change that is imposed. Our immediate reaction is to deny the need to change, followed by overt or covert resistance. We wonder why change is needed when things seem to be going smoothly. We look for others to blame for the change. There is a tendency to find fault with the change and the change makers. “We” are right, and “they” are wrong!

Competitive pressures, global business, new technologies, government regulations, industry standards, and improved work methods have been drastically changing the world of work. Temporary or contracted employees are an increasing part of today’s work force. Multiple careers at multiple companies may become the norm. No longer is it realistic to think that one set of job skills will guarantee a person “lifetime” employment with a single company. Continuous learning has become a responsibility of every employee. Employees at all levels of the organization must assume responsibility for their development, their promotional success, and their careers.

The most pervasive change was brought about by the Information Revolution and the advances in computing technology. It has impacted all jobs, all companies, and all careers. It has changed where we work, how we work, and why we work. We cannot escape its impact.

Advances in information systems and networks are altering organization structures and the way people use, share, and manage information. In today’s networked organization, information flows horizontally as well as vertically. The traditional, functional organization structures, with their built in barriers, are not thought to be well aligned with today’s customer oriented, market drive business focus.

This situation can place a lot of stress on employees and managers alike. Teamwork and interpersonal skills become increasingly important to the success of employees in the networked organization. Computer literacy is an assumed job skill; companies increasingly list computer proficiency as a minimum requirement for most jobs. Employees at all levels of an organization are expected to be information managers.

There is a significant difference between data processing and information management. Companies that generate, report, and file data are not managing information; they are processing data. Companies that convert data to information and use this information as input towards strategic decisions are managing information to their competitive advantage. Managers who fail to realize the difference between data processing and information management will pay a heavy price in the market place.

Information sharing and managing is the responsibility of every supervisor and manager – not the Information Systems department! You will have to embrace this concept to be successful in your career.
There are numerous changes that have occurred in both our personal lives as well as our professional lives. Outside of work we find ourselves impacted by a truly global economy. We wear clothing manufactured in Costa Rica, walk in shoes made in China, drive automobiles containing components from numerous countries such as Germany and Switzerland, watch television programs beamed from all corners of the world, and have the opportunity to eat in restaurants with as many themes as there are nations. Some say that the overabundance of “choices” is a major stress factor itself.

Staying centered, balanced, and focused in changing times can be difficult. Balancing the demands of work, home life, family and friends, saving for children’s education, planning for future retirement, growing intellectually, embracing a religious or philosophical belief system, and maintaining one’s physical and mental health requires a lot of time, effort, and energy. Any one of the above demands can be a full-time pursuit.

You can’t do everything at once. Priorities have to be established. They can act as stress relievers by keeping us focused on what is important. Of course, priorities mean nothing if they are not connected in some meaningful manner to the goals that are important to you and your loved ones. Always remember what is important and what is urgent. Learn to deal with the important things first.
Responsibility Clarification Activity

One quick and useful method for clarifying one’s responsibility is to make a list of the ten major responsibilities for which you think you are responsible. Ask your boss to make a list of the ten major responsibilities he/she thinks you are responsible for and exchange the two lists. Use the two lists as a discussion opportunity to clarify not only your major responsibilities, but also their priorities. This process can be repeated annually or as needed.

Responsibility Clarification Steps

Step One: Employee prepares a list of his/her ten major responsibilities.

Step Two: Employee’s supervisor prepares a list of the ten major responsibilities he/she expects of the employee.

Step Three: The two lists are exchanged.

Step Four: The supervisor and employee have a face-to-face discussion to clarify the supervisor’s expectation and to agree on a final list of responsibilities.

Step Five: Following the face-to-face discussion, the employee rewrites the list of responsibilities and submits the list to the supervisor.

Step Six: The process can be repeated as the employee’s responsibilities change, or as seen fit.
Theme Two: Providing Focus and Direction for Others

What Needs to be Done and How Should it be Done?

In the beginning of nearly every task, you will have to address two key management questions: “What needs to be done?” (planning) and “How should it be done?” (organizing). Before these questions can be effectively answered, you must have a firm grasp on what the organization’s objectives are and how your department’s efforts will contribute to those objectives.

If you have only a “fuzzy” understanding of your organization’s objectives, you may be unable to provide a clear focus for your employees; you may even provide an incomplete or inappropriate focus for them. If you don’t understand where the organization stands or what they are trying to accomplish, you most likely won’t be able to properly align the efforts of your employees.

“We had enough staff to accomplish the job as we thought it should be accomplished. What we failed to realize – until it was too late – was that we did not understand what the job entailed. We all put in a lot of effort, but nothing ever seemed to get accomplished. From a distance, someone said that our efforts were similar to a wagon with horses harnessed on all four sides. All of the horses were pulling hard, but the wagon was going nowhere.”
Sometimes a new supervisor or manager has the tendency to focus exclusively on what needs to be done (the end results) and minimizes how it should be done (the methods used to attain the end results). In these cases, the results may be pursued at the expense of the employees’ time and effort.

“Kyle got the department’s budget in on time this year, but the way he went about collecting the information angered nearly everyone in the department. He seemed to forget how to ‘ask’ for the information. Yes, the budget is done but it’s not OUR budget. It’s Kyle’s and he can have it!”

Experience indicates that the more employees participate in a process, the greater the likelihood that they will feel a sense of “ownership” towards its outcome. It is important to remember that there is a vast difference between compliance and commitment when it comes to addressing the question, “What needs to be done?” Supervisors and managers may want to think about which of the two, compliance or commitment, is the behavior they are trying to achieve.

Aligning Departmental and Organizational Objectives

It has been said that middle managers and first line supervisors are the connecting link between “those who want something done” and “those who get it done.” There is a lot of merit in that statement, and it puts a great deal of responsibility on those two managerial positions. Those positions, in effect, become the link, the cornerstone, and the bridge; all of which are important in “holding” an organization together.

Direction, communication, and information must all flow through these “connecting links.” If these links are uncoupled, how will the organization link its departmental objectives with its overall objectives? How will the organization ever progress from a planning phase to an active mode? How will the efforts of employees be channeled toward the business objectives of the organization?

“I would say that John was a good manager. He worked hard at keeping us informed about events that might impact us. He would talk to us about market trends and how these trends might affect the demand for our products, which in turn might affect our work schedules. For John, communication was like breathing; it was an activity that occurred all the time. We appreciated his efforts and tried to keep him well informed as well. We recognized that it was a two way street.”
Clarifying Position Descriptions and Behavioral Expectations

Once a group of employees are clear on their departmental and company objectives, it becomes necessary to clarify the responsibilities and accountabilities of each member of the group. This can be done using written position descriptions and clarifying behavioral expectations.

Generally, the Human Resources department provides an employee with a copy of his/her position description. These position descriptions are useful, but can become somewhat static over time when not kept up to date. To keep them fresh, supervisors and employees should review them annually for accuracy and provide changes where needed.

In addition to a crisp and current position description, a written agreement clarifying behavioral expectation is also recommended. Behavioral expectations typically describe what is expected of the employee and how they should go about delivering these expectations. For instance, a receptionist’s position description might indicate that the telephone is to be answered in a timely manner, while behavioral expectations might dictate that the telephone is to be answered before the third ring in a friendly, professional manner.

A first line supervisor’s position description might indicate that the position serves as an advocate between the company and the employee. A behavioral expectation might state that the supervisor is to be an advocate of the company to the employees by keeping the employees informed about company policies and by supporting these policies through actions, words, and deeds. In addition, the behavioral expectation might also indicate that the supervisor is to listen to the needs of all employees and convey these needs to the management accurately and competently.

“We lost respect for William, our supervisor, because he would come back from departmental meetings complaining about how “they” were making him adhere to certain company policies. William viewed management actions as separate from his own actions. His attitude was not aligned with the company’s management. He considered things only from his previous position as an employee, and he was unable to consider things from a company or ‘management’ point of view. It didn’t take long for us to realize that William was not part of management, nor was he doing us any good as our supervisor. Our expectations for a supervisor were not being met by William’s attitude or behavior.”
Deciding on the Type of Organizational Climate you want to Create, Communicate, and Manage

Providing focus and direction for a company, department, or for a group of employees involves creating an organizational climate that will support what tasks and objectives you will accomplish, and how they will be accomplished. You can choose to let the organizational climate evolve, or you can choose to purposefully create it.

What exactly is an organizational climate and how does one go about creating it?
Let’s consider some of the elements that make up an organizational climate. The first element involves the supervisor’s opinion of people in general, his/her employees in particular. Does the supervisor respect the employees? Does the supervisor consider his/her employees to be capable, willing, and motivated to work? Does the supervisor consider the employees to be lazy, irresponsible, and not interested in working?

Depending on how these questions are answered, the supervisor may choose to “lead” the employees, or he/she may choose to “manage” them. For the most part, this first element determines the direction of all the other elements.

For Instance:

A person who has a healthy respect for others and believes they will respond positively to leadership tends to:

- Ask for and listen to employee suggestions.
- Communicates in an open fashion.
- Considers mistakes as a means of learning.
- Works for commitment.
- Involves employees in decisions that affect them.
- Holds employees accountable for their actions.

A supervisor with this inclination might create an organizational climate that could be characterized by, “All of us together are smarter than any single one of us.”

A person who thinks employees need to be “supervised” or “closely managed” or they won’t perform tends to:

- Tell employees what to do and how to do it.
- Does not ask for, nor listen, to their suggestions.
- Withholds information; punishes mistakes.
- Demands compliance.
- Makes decisions without employee input.
- Tries to control employee behavior with mandates and rules.

A supervisor with this inclination may create an organizational climate that could be characterized by, “My way, or the highway.”
The Real Meaning of “Practicing” Management

Very few new supervisors or managers are an overnight success. Most of us have to practice what we do before these skills become a permanent part of our behavior. Changing business conditions means that one must acquire new and additional skills in order to meet the new conditions set into place. But what skills are needed?

A good starting point is to take an “inventory” of the skill sets needed by yourself to be successful in your organization. Your time frame should be both today and three years from now.

How important to your organization is the ability to initiate and implement change? How important is computer proficiency? How important is being able to manage with lean staff and resources? How important are flexibility, adaptability, and willingness to change? How important is knowledge of other business functions? How important is collaboration and cooperation? How important is it to have effective presentation skills? How important is a continuous learning curve? How important is it to select and develop employees?

Once you get an idea of some of the answers to these questions, you can start on your own professional development plan. In today’s competitive business world, a person must take charge of his/her own career. It is no longer realistic to expect that “good things will come to those who wait”. Good things, rather, come to those who do good things, are constantly learning new things, and those who are willing to change in order to make good things happen.

Once you have a list of the skills needed by your organization and/or profession, you can do a self-assessment of your current talents. Any gaps between what is needed from you and what talents you already have will provide the input for your own professional developmental plan. Through reading, seminars, developmental assignments, and other training and development opportunities, you can enhance your skill sets – that is, if you want to.

The essence of “practicing” management is that you have to WANT to do so. Being a manager is not easy. One must want to be effective and successful as a manager. He/she has to want to improve his/her effectiveness as a manager. What does it take? Practice, practice, and more practice. Practice won’t make it perfect, but it may make it permanent!
Asking your Employees and Peers for Performance Feedback

If you are going to be successful in providing focus and direction for your employees, you’ll need feedback on your personal performance. Typically, supervisors and managers will receive performance feedback from their boss. The boss’s feedback may be in the form of a formal performance appraisal conducted annually and/or it may be in the form of frequent chats between the supervisor/manager and boss. This type of feedback can be particularly useful as a check to ensure that you have a firm grasp on your role, your responsibilities, and on the behavioral expectations held for you.

There are two other important sources of feedback that some organizations have moved to incorporate in their feedback and performance processes. These two other sources involve feedback from employees and from peers. Both of these sources of feedback can be particularly helpful if the recipient is open to constructive advice and if the ones providing the feedback take the time to expound on both their positive and constructive criticism.

Some organizations have formally incorporated a 360 degree feedback process which allows a person to obtain feedback from their immediate supervisor, employees, peers, and others (if appropriate). Generally, the times selected for feedback are labeled as “core competencies,” “career makers/breakers,” or “performance values in action.”

Typically, the items selected for feedback represent the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and abilities the organization believes are important for success. It is not unusual for an organization to insist that its successful managers possess these characteristics. Most 360 degree feedback processes are designed as a developmental tool; they are designed to provide the feedback recipient with information about his/her strengths, as well as to provide information about ways to overcome any shortcomings.

Like anything else, the value of this feedback is directly related to the willingness of the recipient to consider it. It is human nature to “agree” with the positive feedback and to rationalize away any “negative” comments about one’s own performance. The wise manager will carefully consider all appropriate feedback.
Focus and Direction Activity

If you don’t know where you are going, it will be difficult to provide focus and direction for others. An important starting point in ensuring that you are on the “right” track is to compile an inventory of skills needed to be successful in your organization.

Professional Development Action Plan

Step One: List all the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and abilities that are valued by your organization.

Step Two: For each skill, knowledge, attitude, and ability indicate one of the following: need to acquire, need to improve, adequate as is.

Step Three: For each item that you indicated a need to acquire or a need to improve, list at least two definitive actions you can take (such as read a book, attend a seminar) and a deadline date for its completion.

Step Four: Review this professional development plan with your supervisor or Human Resources representative and ask for their input.

Life-long learning is not an option.

“It has been estimated that 80 percent of the jobs in the United States within 20 years will be cerebral, and only 20 percent manual; the exact opposite of the ratio in 1900.”

- Jennifer Jones, Thinking in the Future Tense

“Already an estimated two-thirds of U.S. employees work in the service sector, and ‘knowledge’ is becoming our most important product.”

- Peter F. Drucker, Post-Capitalist Society
Notes
Theme Three: Matching Talents to Tasks

Talent and Tools: An Analogy

Each individual has a set of talents, gifts, abilities, and skills that can be used to accomplish tasks; think of them as “tools.” We all know that tools are designed for specific purposes: a saw is designed for cutting, a hammer for nailing, a wrench for tightening/loosening, etc. When the proper tool is matched with the appropriate task, the tool is being effectively utilized.

The same is true of a person’s talents. When the proper talents are matched with the appropriate tasks, the person’s talents are being effectively utilized.

But just as tools and talents can be put to effective use, they can also be misused, misinterpreted, mismatched. Even though a wrench may be able to “hammer” something, that’s not what it was designed for, not what it’s meant to do. The tool is not being used effectively. Over time, if continuously misused, a tool can become damaged and no longer useful for its original purpose/intent.

The same can be said for human talents.

Most supervisors and managers are better equipped to understand the requirements of a task than they are equipped to understand the talents, gifts, abilities, and skills of their employees. Without an adequate understanding of the tasks to be done and the talents to be utilized, work assignments cannot be effectively created, nor can tasks be completed properly.

“Harry was a jack of all trades, but a master of none; he knew a little about a lot of things. Clinton, on the other hand, knew a lot about one thing and nearly nothing about anything else. These were the only two employees I had for a long time.”
Assessing talents, gifts, abilities, and skills is not easy; it involves the consideration of many factors and it usually involves a considerable period of time. It is important for supervisors and managers to spend the time to get to know their employees.

Take a moment to think about some of the people you assign work to now. Try to answer these questions for each one of them:

Is this Person …

- Attentive to details
- Able to make decisions with limited information
- A self starter
- A self managed employee
- Comfortable in ambiguous situations
- Cooperative
- A team player
- An effective listener
- Willing to learn from his/her mistakes
- Organized
- Aware of priorities
- An effective communicator of ideas and concepts
- A dependable employee
- A good time manager

BE SURE TO ADD TO THIS LIST WHAT YOU CONSIDER TO BE IMPORTANT

“Over time, I learned that my employees needed far more skills than those usually listed on the typical job description.”
Determining Task Requirements

Assume for a moment that you want one of your employees to make a fifteen minute presentation at your next departmental meeting. (Pick any topic: safety, 401k Plan, revised work schedule, coping with change, etc.)

Now let’s determine the requirements of this task.

What is required?

• Knowledge of the subject to be presented.
• Ability to organize a presentation – introduction, main points, conclusion.
• Ability to manage the time of the presentation.
• Comfort with making an effective presentation in front of a group.
• Initiative to learn more about the subject.
• Creativity to “enrich” the presentation using visual aids.
• And so forth …

Note how each of these task requirements is described in terms of talents, gifts, abilities, and skills.

Make a list of the task requirements needed by an experienced employee in order to train a new employee on the job:

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Talent/Task Mismatches

Every supervisor and manager at one time or another must face the issue of performance shortfalls caused by a task/talent mismatch.

The individual selected to make the fifteen minute presentation knew the subject matter, prepared a great outline, and was comfortable speaking in front of the group, but presented the topic in a boring, uninteresting manner. The speaker lost the audience’s attention almost from the start of the presentation!

Effective communication by the speaker and attentive listening by the audience did not occur.

Task/talent mismatches can be avoided if the task requirements are known and the talents needed to fill those requirements are understood. If you, as the supervisor or manager, determine that there is not a “perfect” match, perhaps a team effort should be utilized. For instance, one person may be proficient at developing the presentation outline, but another person may be proficient at delivering the presentation.

This team approach – if feasible – simply recognizes and takes advantage of the various strengths of different individuals. The requirements of a task don’t necessarily need to be changed, but the strategy used to match the talents to the task may need modification. It can be more effective if the staffing level/talent pool permits a team approach.

IF THE REQUIREMENTS OF A TASK EXCEED THE TALENT LEVEL OF THE PERSON ASSIGNED TO PERFORM THE TASK, THEN TRAINING MAY BE NEEDED TO HELP THE INDIVIDUAL BE SUCCESSFUL.

“The job requirements keep changing. Most of the knowledge, abilities, and skills that we needed a few years ago, have become outdated. Today, knowledge of and the ability to use the computer are much more important to what we do. It’s been difficult to make the adjustment.”
Training and Performance

From a conceptual point of view, training and performance should be viewed as part of the same cycle. Training can help improve performance; however, not every performance problem is correctable through training.

Training can be defined as “the acquisition of skills and knowledge to perform a current job.” Development, therefore, can be described as “the acquisition of skills and knowledge to perform a potential future job.” Given these definitions, training and development are on-going activities that are closely linked with the employee’s performance on the job.

It is a mistake for a supervisor or manager to think that training is the responsibility of a “training department.” Employee performance on the job, including training, is the primary responsibility of first line management; it is not the responsibility of a staff function. Hopefully, there will be training professionals and a training function that will be available to help assist in the delivery of training and development programs, but, if not, the responsibility resides solely with the first line management.

If training is the responsibility of first line management, then who is responsible for learning? The obvious answer: the trainee.

Learning can be viewed in three levels: familiarity, understanding, and ability to do. All three levels are important, but the ability to do – application on the job – is how “learning” through “training” is converted into employee “performance.”

**REMEMBER:** The foundation of “The Human Side of Management” states that it is the manager’s responsibility to create, nurture, and maintain an organizational climate where people can be successful in applying their talents and gifts to their duties and responsibilities.
What Makes Training Effective?

All of us, at one time or another, have been subjected to “training programs” that left us bored, uninterested, and wondering why we were wasting our time. And then there were those times when the presenter kept us involved in the “learning” process and provided us an opportunity to take away some meaningful information that we could effectively use back on the job.

What factors, then, make a training program effective? Each of us probably has our own list of factors; not everyone learns in the same way.

However, consider the following:

**Effective Training is a Result of Three Factors:**

1. Relevant, job related training, *visibly supported* by management.

2. Interesting and effective methods of presentation that *involve* the employees in the learning process.

3. Active support and encouragement by management to then *apply* the information learned back on the job.

Did learning occur? Did the training make an impact? The real test of this is on the job application encouraged by a supervisor.

There are a lot of “good” training topics, and most of us tend to be more interested in those topics that have some relevancy to our actual job. Most of us also like to know that the training is “supported” by management. That is, adequate time is set aside for the training to occur and work schedules are adjusted so that hardships don’t impact either those in training or those on the job during the training period. Management’s visible sponsorship of the training is also thought to impact new employees, showing that expanding their knowledge is a necessary aspect of the job.
Examples of ineffective training:

“The Time Management training session was not really relevant to our jobs. There was no way we could carry those planning notebooks around with us, much less take the time to complete all those different sections. This topic was more suited to administrative employees.”

“Attending a training session on my day off – especially after working a 12 hour night shift – takes away from my incentive to learn.”

“The presenter knew her stuff and that’s probably why she is a successful lawyer. But, she talked over our heads when presenting the material, and she talked down to us when we had questions. After a while, everyone just sat there in silence.”

“The training session on Participative Decision Making was presented in an effective, interesting manner. The examples used by the instructor were very relevant to our everyday lives. You would have thought that he had worked in the company. The problem was that our immediate supervisor was of the ‘old school’ and had no intention of having us participate in the department’s decisions.”

Note: It is most helpful - and effective - if the material is presented in an interesting manner. Adults seem to learn better if they are involved in the learning process and if various methods – such as slides, discussion, visual aids – are used within the presentation. Problem solving exercises can also be a highly effective training tool.
Talent/Task Matching Activity

Managers are responsible for the collective work output of their employees; therefore, it makes sense for them to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the task assigned is aligned with the talents of those who will perform the work. Use the following worksheet to compare the major talents of each of your employees with the major task assignments.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee</th>
<th>Major Talents</th>
<th>Major Task Assignments</th>
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Notes
Theme Four: Coaching for Performance Enhancement

The Manager as Coach

Recent books and articles have suggested that the role of manager is similar to that of a “coach.” Most of us have had experiences at some time in our lives with organized sports, either as a participant or spectator. In either case, we have surely observed the role played by a coach or by a coaching staff. Take a minute to think about these following “coaching roles”: creation and communication of shared goals, establishment of priorities, clarification of individual roles and responsibilities, performance improvement coaching, reinforcement of desired behaviors, and role modeling.

CREATION AND COMMUNICATION OF SHARED GOALS: Organizations exist because it is believed that two or more people working together for a common purpose can accomplish more than individuals working separately. Sports teams, like organizations, have purposes for their existence. Business (and sports teams alike) owners, customers, and employees all have a stake in the success of the organization. Success can be defined as accomplishing the goals of the organization. One of the first tasks of a coach (or of a manager) is to create and communicate a compelling case for the pursuit and accomplishment of goals.

People must know, understand, and accept the reasons for giving their effort, teamwork, time, and energy to the organization. These goals should be shared by each individual. These goals should be embraced, not simply acknowledged. These goals should be embedded in one’s attitude and behavior. These goals should be reflected in one’s performance. The individual and collective accomplishment of goals is, by definition, the accomplishment of goals by the organization – or team – and thus the fulfillment of its purposes.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES: Organizations have multiple goals. Individuals within an organization typically have multiple responsibilities that help achieve these goals. The manager (or coach) must establish or set priorities in order to bring clarification and organization to the collective performance of a team or group of individuals. The prioritization of tasks and responsibilities helps to ensure a focusing of effort and energy in the direction that is aligned with the pursuit and achievement of goals.
As conditions change, an effective coach reevaluates priorities and makes adjustments accordingly. Thus, the coach must be aware of what is going on at all times, where resources need to be reassigned, and what options are available to stay on track with goal achievement.

**CLARIFICATION OF INDIVIDUAL ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:** In a sports team, such as football, each player has an assigned role and specific responsibilities based on their position – like the center on a football team being responsible for snapping the ball to the quarterback and blocking. Any individual “playing” their given position assumes the specific responsibilities that come along with it.

A coach needs to take the time to clarify an individual’s role and responsibilities. When a team is underperforming, a coach’s best line is to say, “We need to return to the basics!” Even when things are going well, it’s always best to remember the basics and fundamentals and build from those. Too often, people become distracted and forget the important foundation that basics set up for success.

**PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COACHING:** In football, nearly every offensive play is designed to score points. On the drawing board, if every player executes the offensive play correctly and on time, the play will be a success. In reality, this does not always happen: someone misses an assignment, someone jumps off sides, or someone is overpowered by a defender. You have to be ready to cope with mistakes and be ready to improve and change in order to make up for them.

Effective coaches know the world of playing the field and the world of the drawing board are not the same. The “X’s” and “O’s” of the drawing board are static and infallible, while the people on the playing field are dynamic and imperfect. Performance improvement is a journey, not a destination. There is always room for improvement, because situations are always in a state of change.

**REINFORCEMENT OF DESIRED BEHAVIORS:** A major part of coaching is reinforcement. Behavior that is positively reinforced is more likely to be repeated. People need to know when they are performing well. People need to have a sense of correct performance, and they need to experience success and the positive feelings that come along with it.

**ROLE MODELING:** Another very important role a coach plays in the lives of his/her players is that of a role model. It is one thing to tell another person what goals to pursue, what priorities to follow, and what responsibilities to pursue, but it is quite another to display these same ideas in one’s own life. A coach who is a positive role model is more likely to earn the respect of the players than who proclaims, “Do what I say, not what I do!”

If you continue with the sports analogy, you can determine that one of the major aspects of coaching is “performance improvement” – both individually and collectively as a team. In football, for instance, practices consume more than half of the season as compared to the one game per week played. These practices help hone the skills of the players to work effectively as a team when it counts, on game day. Individuals needing specific skill enhancement can also devote time to these needs, usually under the guidance of a member of the coaching staff.

In business, as in sports, when a performance deficiency or interpersonal conflict occurs, action must be taken to correct it. The role the manager (coach) plays in this regard is very important. Not only is performance improvement as a team an important aspect of your “coaching” role, but also encouraging individual performance improvement.
In general, effective individual performance can be expressed in a formula as follows:

**Effective Individual Performance = f(ability x willingness x job fit)**

The formula suggests that Effective Individual Performance is a function of three variables, the individual’s ability, willingness, and job fit. If any of these variables are zero, then individual performance is zero.

In coaching for individual performance, a few basics of “coaching” are essential to recall:

- First, is the performance shortfall caused by a deficiency of knowledge, a deficiency of will, a mismatch of job fit, or some combination of the above?
- Second, is the performance shortfall caused by a lack of understanding of goals, priorities, roles or responsibilities?
- Third, is the performance shortfall caused by a lack of experience in performing the task? If the individual has experience in performing this task, what type of reinforcement was given?
- Fourth, as a coach, did you set a positive example?

An effective coach will develop and review a checklist, such as the one above, prior to initiating a performance improvement plan.

**Checklist for the initial assessment of why there may be an individual performance shortfall:**

1. Does the person know what the job, assignment, or task involves?
2. Does the person understand how the job is linked to the overall goals and priorities?
3. Does the person appear to be omitted to the overall goals and priorities?
4. Does the person understand his/her roles and responsibilities?
5. Does the person exhibit commitment to his/her roles and responsibilities?
6. Does there appear to be a good fit between this person and the job requirement?
7. Has the person been sufficiently trained? Has the person moved through the three levels of learning: familiarity, understanding, and ability to do?
8. Has the person performed this job, assignment, or task before? If so, at what level did this person perform: fell short of expectations, fully met expectation, exceeded expectations?
9. What type of reinforcement was used: positive and constructive, or negative and critical?
10. Have adequate resources been provided for the person to perform the job: time, tools, guidance, etc?
11. What level of willingness is present in the individual for this job, assignment, or task?
An effective coach has the opportunity to identify an individual’s abilities and skill sets and to “coach” these abilities and skill sets to higher levels of performance. To the extent that an individual’s abilities and skill sets match the job to be performed and the results expected, then they can be labeled either as career enablers or career accelerators. Career enablers and accelerators are items to be stressed when coaching for performance enhancement.

Try this:

For each of your employees, list the abilities and skill sets that you consider to be potential career enablers or career accelerators. Indicate how you plan to help each employee build upon their career enablers or career accelerators.
Career Stallers and Stoppers

Some individuals are deficient in key abilities and skill sets that are crucial for job success; these are referred to as career stallers or career stoppers. A center on a football team who can snap the ball but not block will have a very short-lived career. Likewise, a person in the sales industry who can prospect but can’t close the deal will have a very limited future in that position.

For each of your employees, list their abilities and skill sets that you consider potential career stallers or career stoppers. Indicate how you plan to help each employee overcome their potential disablers.
In the role as coach, a manager/supervisor must know how to provide guidance in order to help the development of career enablers and career accelerators, or to help individuals overcome ability and skill set deficiencies that could result in a stall or stopping of their careers.

Most individuals have an assortment of both strengths and shortcomings which means that the challenges for the willing coach will always be present.

Coaching is a never ending process; it is an everyday activity.

Players tend to play the game like they practice. If they fail to put forth the necessary effort in practice, they will fail to do so in the game.

Like many things in life, it is difficult – if not impossible – to make up for lost time, effort, or knowledge. Usually, it is easier to make effective use of time as it occurs, to continuously exert the necessary effort as needed, and to acquire and utilize knowledge as we grow.

A coach cannot rise above the performance level of the players. A coach is only as successful as those coached. If there is no development, no growth, no performance, no results, then the coaching has been less than effective.

It is not sufficient to say, “I coached the players to perform and achieve results.” The key question is, “Did the players perform and achieve results?”
Crafting your Recognition and Reward Strategies

People do things for a reason. Our behavior is conditioned by the feedback that follows it. Positive recognition and rewards tend to reinforce our behavior while negative or nonexistent rewards tend to extinguish our behavior.

The central question to ask is, “What are the consequences to the individual for a particular on the job behavior?” Implicit in the question is the understanding that the consequence is as the individual perceives it, not necessarily as someone else intends it to be.

Keep these two important points in mind:

1. If an employee’s on the job behavior leads to positive feedback for the employee, then the behavior will likely continue.
2. If an employee’s on the job behavior leads to negative consequences for the employee, then the behavior will likely cease or diminish.

Identifying or predicting what consequence of behavior will reinforce the desired behavior may be difficult. A consequence that is considered positive by one individual may be considered negative by another individual.

“It took me a while to understand the differences between my two newest employees, Joey and James. Joey worked hard for the opportunity to be given greater responsibility; he would always respond positively to the challenge that would potentially give him greater responsibility. James, on the other hand, felt that the harder he worked the more he was given to do. To suggest to James that there would be more responsibility available if he worked harder was not an effective motivational tool for him.”

Sometimes, long standing and well accepted company-wide reward procedures have less of an impact than is supposed.

“For a number of years, our organization had a policy of giving across the board raises annually to all employees. Each year, all employees would receive a fixed percentage increase, typically in the 3% range. This annual increase was done automatically, and, usually, a big deal was made it and the raise would be announced at the annual dinner in December. The president would make a speech praising the employees for their hard work and linking the ability to pay the annual increase to the efforts of the employees. In fact, the individual employee’s performance, or lack thereof, played no role whatsoever as far as receiving the raise was concerned. Poor performers were rewarded the same as outstanding performers. While no one turned down the annual raise, many employees felt that the organization was sending the wrong message with this policy.”
One mistake many first time managers make is to assume that other employees will be motivated by the same type of recognition or reward that the manager himself/herself likes to receive.

“I am a great believer in giving credit where credit is due and I also like to be recognized for my efforts as well as recognize others for their efforts. Once a week, I made it a point to verbally communicate my appreciation to my staff for their efforts and results. One Friday I was telling Sue how pleased the Vice President had been with a particular staffing report she had prepared. It was important to me to let her know that the Vice President was made well aware of her role in the preparation of the report. I went on to tell her how pleased I was with her attention to detail and accuracy and how much I appreciated her contribution. She listened with a slight smile on her face and when I had finished my ‘recognition speech,’ she said, ‘You know I could get a lot more work done if you would quit coming around every week to tell me how much you appreciate my work.’”

What types of recognition and rewards do you consider to be reinforcers for your behavior? Why?
Recognition and Reward Activities

What is your recognition and reward strategy? Do you try to recognize and reward all employees the same? What has been your experience in designing and delivering recognition and rewards for outstanding performance? What surprises have you experienced when you have tried to recognize and reward someone?

For each of your employees, make a list of the types of recognition and rewards they respond to positively. Indicate how you plan to utilize recognition and rewards to reinforce your employee’s positive performance.
About the Author

Carl F. Hicks, Jr. consults with successful senior executives and business owners, helping them to achieve their next level of success by optimizing individual, team, and organizational performance. Carl focuses on the Human Side of Management - helping clients identify, think through, and effectively address interpersonal and performance issues that are acting as a drag on success. Clients range from emerging entrepreneurs to Fortune 100 firms. His results oriented approach to management combines a formal management education with more than thirty years of practical consulting experience.

Working with some of America’s best-managed companies, Carl has helped them to identify and develop their top managerial talent, strengthen their work teams, and optimize their organization’s performance. Clients recognize his adeptness at aligning individual efforts with organizational objectives to help people stay focused on critical strategic initiatives, growth, and profitability.

Clients, representing a variety of industries, have included:
- eMoney Advisor
- Glycos Biotechnologies
- Guardian Life Insurance
- Lyondell Chemical Company
- North American Pipe Corporation
- Park Avenue Securities
- The World Bank
- Verizon/Skytel
- Viking Range Corporation
- Wesley Medical Center
- Westlake Polymers

He has been featured or quoted in:
- Consultants News
- The Wall Street Journal

Carl is a Senior Birkman Consultant for Birkman International, a distinction earned by only 5% of the Birkman Consultants in the world.

Carl and his wife, Carolyn, are the proud parents of a daughter, Natalya, who is the founder and CEO of Natalya H. Bah Consulting - a Project Management Consulting business in Washington D.C., and the happy grandparents of three grandchildren.

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