

THE MANAGEMENT PARADOX

A Lesson In Leadership

Most managers live in a world that is akin to a war-zone. There is a seemingly endless barrage of situations, problems, imperatives, and deliverables that confront them daily. Often in automatic mode, they execute solutions on the run, working extensively just to keep up with their challenging workloads. They are exhausted and, yet, exhilarated.

Trapped in this mode, it is impossible for managers to ever get ahead. They are pursuing “*the now*” or, even worse, “*the past*” where some issues remain unresolved. There just isn’t any time for reflecting on things, let alone anticipating and planning for the future. The manager’s default position is dedicated to reaction. Given this unhappy picture of a manager’s world, how can one extricate her/himself from this conundrum?

The Other Side

In order to begin to formulate a solution, it is critical to appreciate what’s on the other side of the management equation: what it is and what’s happening there. The other side is the manager’s employees. These are the resources which the organization has made available to support the manager in achieving performance.

There often is a dramatic variance in perceptions between what the manager *believes* the employees want and what, in fact, those employees desire. Most employees want more than just a paycheque – they really want to be educated, engaged and respected.

Employee surveys consistently verify that the majority of employees:

- ◆ Want to have access to more business-related information
- ◆ Want to be involved more seriously in solving problems
- ◆ Want to be engaged more fully in decisions affecting their work
- ◆ Want to assume increased responsibility, authority and accountability
- ◆ Want to make more significant contributions to the organization

Because, your employees represent a vast reservoir of under-utilized knowledge, talent and ideas, the solution is to accommodate these aspirational goals of your employees, while concurrently satisfying the needs of the organization. The manager’s imperative, therefore, is to achieve this delicate balance and alignment.



The Management Paradox

So, the *Management Paradox* is shown to be simply that while the manager is inundated and overloaded, the employees are available and desirous to assume higher value assignments. Managers must stretch beyond their bias that affirms that only they are capable of certain activities and create new ways of arranging and distributing work, through engaging their employees in broader functions.

Some business owners and managers will discount this notion out-of-hand. They will contend that their employees lack the motivation and basic skills to assume more responsibility. They will cite examples of sub-par performance and ineffectiveness. They will echo the low esteem that they manifest toward their workforce.

I challenge such thinking with the suggestion that those instances primarily are the outcome of a colossal failure of management – that it is actually the manager who is demotivating their employees. Setting a higher standard and supporting your employees to excel is what effective managers do.

Another Voice

Let me say this in a different way. In one corner is the manager who is struggling with an overwhelming workload. Achievement, it is thought, will be the result of just expending more time and effort. The manager assumes total ownership, not only of the outcome, but also of doing the actual activity. This is painful and it is self-inflicted.

In the other corner are the manager's employees who really desire more. So while the manager is run ragged, the employees are left spinning their wheels. If you don't trust my views, just ask them. They'll tell you the right answer. Isn't it worth trying another approach? For further ideas, go to Articles at www.diamondmanagementinstitute.com.

Required Actions

I have heard managers say: "They don't need to know that." The manager, in this instance, is presuming not only to understand what employees want, but also to have considered thoroughly what information is appropriate for them. Only through ongoing conversations and the sharing of relevant information can this gap be narrowed.

Employees are significantly more intimate with their jobs than is their manager. As such, they are better able to identify bottlenecks, process inefficiencies and other problem areas. Invariably, they also will have many sensible and achievable ideas for making improvements.

The manager needs to cultivate and support the conditions for team problem solving, while developing this expertise in their employees. And when decisions are made to endorse solutions that were suggested by employees, the resulting implementation always becomes highly energized, effective and sustainable.



As a manager shares more information with employees and engages them substantially in the problem solving process, both the competence and confidence of the employees become enhanced. This creates a fertile opportunity for the manager to delegate more responsibility and authority to those employees, thereby sharing the workload in a different and new manner. The result is that the employees are more satisfied and the manager finally has some time to anticipate and plan for the future.

Employees, who are better informed, more engaged, and have increased responsibility with corresponding authority, will embrace a regime of personal accountability. This will translate into a positive work environment where everyone is committed to making the maximum contribution to the organization's success.

Implementing Change

Implementing this kind of change is a deliberate act of management. It requires a vision for a different type of workplace and a new set of relationships.

It will challenge the inherent beliefs that a manager may hold and, for many, this can be an uncomfortable and threatening experience. The manager needs to become comfortable with the concept of a new coaching role that is more employee-centric.

Employees also will need to develop supplementary skills in order to master their expanded responsibilities and gain confidence in their newly-enhanced roles. In addition, the overall process requires high-level planning and co-ordination.

We have developed these very skills and expertise through numerous engagements over many years. Let us help you to manoeuvre out of the confines of the *Management Paradox* and lead your employees and organization to the next level of performance.

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