

Chapter 1

You're a Manager – Now What?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Working out what management is
 - ▶ Moving from being a doer to becoming a manager of doers
 - ▶ Understanding the changing workforce
 - ▶ Defining the key functions of management
 - ▶ Taking the first steps towards becoming a manager
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Congratulations! You're reading this book, so you're probably

- ✔ A manager
- ✔ A manager-to-be
- ✔ Someone who's not sure about management or being a manager, but who'd like to know what all the fuss is about

Of course, if you're simply curious and want to discover the intimate details about the kinds of management techniques that can help you get the best from your employees every day of the week, you're equally welcome!

Managing is truly a calling – one that, as managers, the authors of this book are proud to have answered. *We're the few. The proud. The managers.* In the world of business, no other position allows you to have such a direct, dramatic and positive impact on the lives of others and on the ultimate success of your enterprise.

Identifying the Different Styles of Management

Managing is about:

- ✓ Getting things done through others
- ✓ Using scarce resources to best advantage
- ✓ Coping with change and uncertainty
- ✓ Achieving and delivering results

Seems simple enough. But why do so many bright, industrious people have trouble managing well? And why do so many companies today seem to offer flavour-of-the-month training programmes? How often have you been introduced to some hot new management concept - guaranteed to turn your organisation around in no time flat - only to watch it fade away within a few months, if not sooner? Of course, as soon as one management fad disappears, another is waiting in the wings to replace it.

‘What? You didn’t catch onto that concept of Six Sigma? That’s okay - we decided that it doesn’t really work anyway. Now, we want you to pay close attention to this DVD on Armadillo Management (hard on the outside, soft on the inside) - this is the latest thing. The managing director read an article about it in the *Financial Times* and wants us to implement it throughout our UK operations right away!’



Unfortunately, good management is a scarce commodity - at once precious and fleeting. Despite years of evolution in management theory and the comings and goings of countless management fads, many workers - and managers, for that matter - have developed a distorted view of management and its practice, with managers often not knowing the right approach to take, or exactly what to do. And if managers don’t know what to do, employees certainly won’t either.

Do you ever hear any of the following statements at your office or place of work?

- ✓ We don’t have the authority to make that decision.
- ✓ She’s in charge of the department - fixing the problem is her responsibility, not ours.
- ✓ Why do they keep asking us what we think when they never use anything we say?

- ✔ I'm sorry, but that's our policy. We're not allowed to make exceptions.
- ✔ If my manager doesn't care, I don't either.
- ✔ It doesn't matter how hard you work; no one's going to notice in any case.
- ✔ You can't trust employees anyway.



When you hear statements like these at work, red lights should be flashing before your eyes and alarm bells should be ringing in your ears. Such statements indicate that managers and employees aren't communicating effectively – that managers don't trust their employees, and that employees lack confidence in their managers. If you're lucky, you can find out about these kinds of problems while you still have a chance to do something about them. If you're not so lucky and you miss the clues, you may be stuck making the same mistakes again and again.

The expectations and commitments that employees carry with them on the job are in large part a product of the way in which their managers treat them. Following are the most commonly adopted styles of management. Do you recognise your management style?

Macho management

Okay. Here's the \$64,000 question: what's the best way to make something you've planned happen? Everyone seems to have a different answer. Some people see management as something you do *to* people, not *with* them. Does this type of manager sound familiar? 'We're going to do it my way. Understand?' Or perhaps the ever-popular threat: 'It had better be on my desk by the end of the day – or else!' If worst comes to worst, a manager can unveil the ultimate weapon: 'Mess up one more time, and you're sacked!'

This type of management is often known as *Theory X management*, which assumes that people are inherently lazy and you need to drive them to perform. Managing by fear and intimidation is always guaranteed to get a response. The question is: do you get the kind of response that you really want? When you closely monitor your employees' work, you usually end up with only short-term compliance. In other words, you never get the best from others by building a fire under them – you have to find a way to build a fire within them.

Sometimes managers have to take command of the situation. If you have to deliver a proposal in an hour and your customer just sent you some important changes, take charge of the situation to ensure that the right people are

on the task – that is, if you're serious about keeping your customer. When you have to act quickly with perhaps not as much discussion as you'd like, however, it's important to apologise in advance and let people know why you're doing things the way you are.

Participative management

At the other end of the spectrum, some people see management as participative. *Theory Y management* assumes that people basically want to do a good job. In the extreme interpretation of this theory, managers are supposed to be sensitive to their employees' feelings and be careful not to do anything that may disturb their employees' tranquillity and sense of self-worth.

'I found a problem with your report because none of the numbers are correct. We therefore need to consider our alternatives for taking a more careful look at these figures in the future.'

Again, managers may get a response with this approach (or they may choose to do the work themselves!), but are they likely to get the best possible response? Sometimes, yes; not always, however. In many cases, employees can, and do, take advantage of their managers. But you do get a better response if you're at least supportive at first.

The best way

Good managers realise that they don't have to be tough all the time – and that participation does work if you really mean it. If your employees are diligently performing their assigned tasks and no business emergency requires your immediate intervention, you can step back and let them do their jobs. Not only do your employees become more responsible, but you also can concentrate your efforts on what's most important to the bottom-line success of your organisation.



A manager's main job is to inspire employees to do their best and establish a working environment that allows them to reach their goals. The best managers make every possible effort to remove the organisational obstacles that prevent employees from doing their jobs and to obtain the resources and training that employees need to do their jobs effectively. All other goals – no matter how lofty or pressing – must take a back seat.

Bad systems, bad policies, bad procedures and poor treatment of other people are organisational weaknesses that managers must be skilled at identifying and repairing or replacing.



Build a strong organisational foundation for your employees. Support your people, and you find they support you. Time and time again, when given the opportunity to achieve, workers in all kinds of businesses, from factories to venture capital firms, have proved this rule to be true. If you haven't seen it at your place of business, you may be mistaking your employees for problems. Stop squeezing them and start squeezing your organisation. The result is employees who want to succeed and a business that flourishes along with them. Who knows, your employees may even stop hiding when they see you coming their way!

Squeezing employees may be easier than fighting the convoluted systems and cutting through the bureaucratic barnacles that have grown on your organisation. You may be tempted to yell, 'It's your fault that our department didn't achieve its goals!' Yes, it may be tempting to blame your employees for the organisation's problems, but doing so isn't going to solve them. Of course, you may get a quick, short-lived response when you push your people, but ultimately, you're failing to deal with the organisation's real problems.

Everyone wants to win. The challenge of management is to define winning in such a way that it feels like winning for everyone in the organisation. This, of course, is extremely difficult. People are often competing with colleagues for a piece of the pie rather than trying to make the pie bigger. Your job is to help make a bigger pie.

Recognising that Quick Fixes Don't Work

Despite what many people want you to believe, management isn't prone to simple solutions or quick fixes. Being a manager isn't simple. Yes, the best management solutions tend to be common sense; however, turning common sense into common practice is sometimes difficult.



Management is an attitude – a way of life. Management is a very real desire to work with people and help them succeed, as well as a desire to help your organisation succeed. Management is a life-long learning process that doesn't end when you walk out of a one-hour seminar or finish viewing a 25-minute DVD. Management is like the old story about the happy homeowner who was shocked to receive a bill for £100 to fix a leaking pipe. When asked to explain the basis for this seemingly high charge, the plumber said, 'Tightening the nut cost you £5. Knowing which nut to tighten cost you £95!'

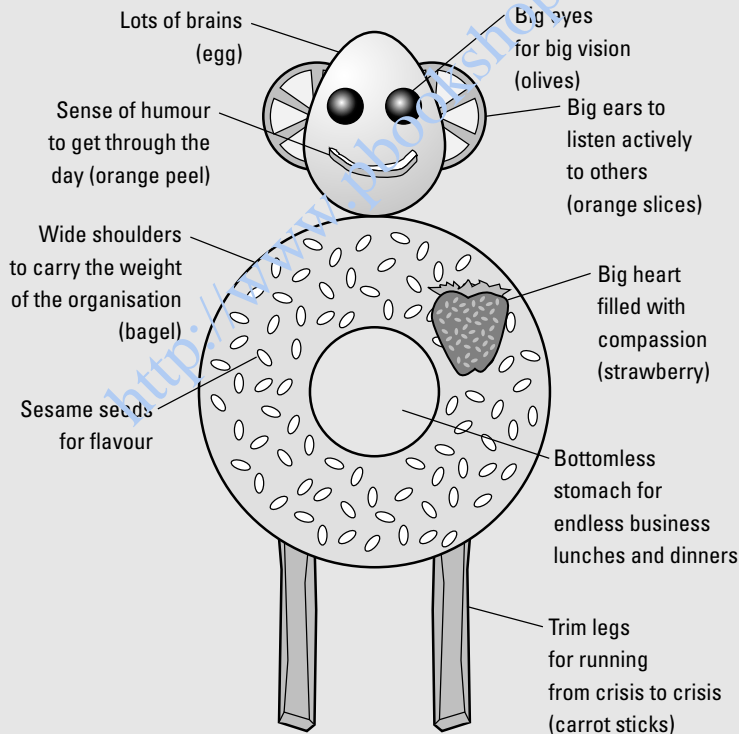


Building a tasty, but useless, manager

Once, Peter went to one of those touchy-feely off-site management meetings meant to build teamwork and communication among the members of the group. Picture this: just after lunch, a big tray of leftover veggies, bagels, fruit and such was sitting on a table at the side of the room. The course leader rose from his chair, faced the group and said, 'Your next task is to split yourselves into four groups and construct a model of the perfect manager using only the items on that tray of leftovers.' A collective groan filled the room. 'I don't want to

hear any complaints,' the trainer said. 'I just want to see happy people doing happy things for the next half-hour.'

The teams feverishly went about their task of building the perfect manager. With some managers barely throttling the temptation to engage each other in a massive food fight, the little figures began to take shape. A banana here, a carrot stick there . . . and voilà! After a brief competition for dominance, the winners got their crowns. The result follows.



We have to admit that the result was kind of cute (and kind of tasty too), but did it really make a difference in the way these managers managed their employees when they returned

to the office the next day? No. Was the seminar a nice break from the day-to-day office routine? Yes. Was it a meaningful teaching tool with lasting impact? No.



Management is a people job. If you're not up to the task of working with people – helping them, listening to them, encouraging them and guiding them – then you shouldn't be a manager.

Because management is such a challenge, an entire management training industry has sprung up, ready to help managers find out how to solve their problems. Unfortunately, trainers often focus on creating instant gratification among course attendees, many of whom have spent hundreds and even thousands of pounds to be there. 'Let's give them so much stuff to use that it's their fault if they never use any of it!'

Meeting the Management Challenge

When you're assigned a task in a non-management position, completing it by yourself is fairly simple and straightforward. Your immediate results are in direct response to your effort. To accomplish your task, you first review the task, you decide how best to accomplish it and then you set schedules and milestones for its successful completion. Assuming that you have access to the tools and resources necessary to accomplish your task, you can probably do it yourself quickly and easily. You're an expert doer – a bright, get-things-done type of person.

However, if you hold a management position, you probably got that job because you proved yourself to be very skilled in the areas that you're now responsible for managing.



Moving up and away

Peter's friend John was a member of a team of software programmers developing complex apps. When he was a team member, everything was fine. He came to work in a T-shirt and jeans – just like the rest of his teammates – and often spent time with his programmer friends after hours. The bond that they shared changed, however, when John was selected to manage the team.

In his new role of manager, John first shifted offices. Instead of sharing an open space with the other programmers, he moved into his own office – one with four walls and a window

looking out over the car park. A secretary was assigned to guard his door. Of course, the jeans and T-shirt had to go – he replaced them with a suit and tie. Instead of having fun programming, John was now concerned with more serious topics such as cost overruns, schedule delays and returns on investments.

As John's role changed, so did he. And as John changed, so did his relationship with his team. He was no longer one of the crew; he was The Boss. To achieve his goals, John quickly had to make the transition from a doer to a manager of doers.

When you want to get a task done through someone else, you employ a different set of skills to when you do the task yourself. All of a sudden, because of this simple decision to pass the responsibility for completion of a task on to someone else, you introduce an interpersonal element into your equation. 'Oh, no! You mean I have to actually work with people?' Being technically good at your job isn't enough – no matter how good your technical skills are. Now you must have good planning, organisational, leadership and follow-up skills.



In other words, in addition to being a good doer, you have to be a good leader, director and organiser of doers.

The old rules don't work any more

If this challenge isn't already enough, managers today face yet another challenge – one that's shaken the foundations of modern business. The new reality is that managers and workers have a partnership in the workplace.

Originally, management was about dividing the company's work into discrete tasks, assigning the work to individual workers and then closely monitoring the workers' performance and steering them towards accomplishing their tasks on time and within budget. The old reality of management often relied on fear, intimidation and power over people to accomplish goals. If things weren't going according to management's plan, then management commanded its way out of the problem: 'I don't care what you have to do to get it done – just get it done. Now!' The line between managers and workers was drawn clearly and drawn often.

In the new business environment, what's going on inside the organisation is a reflection of what's going on outside the organisation. The following factors are creating rapid and constant change in today's new business environment:

- ✓ A surge of global competition and activity
- ✓ The global and international downturn leading to business difficulties
- ✓ The rise of global, commercial and organisational bases in China, India and elsewhere
- ✓ New technology and innovation
- ✓ The flattening of organisational hierarchies
- ✓ Widespread downsizing, re-engineering and lay-offs
- ✓ The rise of small businesses
- ✓ The changing values of today's workers
- ✓ The increasing demands for better customer service

The technology explosion is here!

Years ago, Charles Handy said of his old offices at Shell UK: 'In the future, we will not need these offices. Because of technology, people will be able to work wherever they need and wherever they want.' And – sure enough – he was right. Eighty per cent of Shell's old offices in London have been sold off and converted into apartments. And all because of technology! However, do note: managing people working away from the office brings all sorts of fresh challenges. And you can't insist that people come to work in the office just because you're

not up to these challenges. The landscape of business worldwide has changed dramatically during the past couple of decades. If you don't change with it, you're going to be left far behind your competitors. You may think that you can get away with treating your employees like human assets or even like children, but you can't. You can't because your competitors are discovering how to unleash the hidden power of their employees. They're no longer just talking about it; they're doing it!

Of course, managers still have to divide and assign work, but workers are taking on more of that responsibility. Most importantly, managers are finding out that to get the best work, they can't command their employees – they have to create an environment that fosters their employees' desire to do their best work. This is the partnership between managers and workers in the workplace.

It's a new world

A few years ago, Bob made a presentation to a group of high-tech managers. As he was wrapping up his presentation, he opened the floor to questions. A hand shot up and the manager said, 'With all the downsizing and lay-offs that we've endured, people are lucky to get a salary, much less anything else. Why do we have to bother to empower and reward employees?' Before Bob had a chance to respond, another manager in the audience shot back, 'Because it's a new world.'

This response really sums it all up. In business, times are changing. Now that employees have tasted the sweet nectar of empowerment, you can't turn back. Companies that stick with the old way of doing business – the hierarchical, highly centralised model – are losing employees and customers to those companies that use the new ways of doing business and make them a part of their corporate culture. The best employees are leaving the old-model companies in droves, seeking employers who treat them with respect and who are willing to grant them greater autonomy and responsibility.

If you don't change, that leaves you with the employees who don't want to take risks or rock the boat. You get the yes-men and yes-women. No one challenges your ideas because they're afraid to. No one suggests better or more

efficient ways to do business because they know that you don't listen or care anyway. Your employees don't bother to go out of their way to help a customer because you don't trust them to make the most basic decisions – the ones that can make the biggest difference to the satisfaction of your precious customers – or their lack of satisfaction.

Imagine the difference between an employee who tells your key customer, 'Sorry, my hands are tied. I'm not allowed to make any exceptions to our policies,' and the employee who tells that customer, 'I'll do everything in my power to get you your order by your deadline.' Who do you think your customers prefer to do business with? Who would you prefer to do business with? (*Hint:* Don't even think about the first alternative!)



Managers used to try to buy behaviour, commitment and loyalty; and some workers were even called *hired hands*. Today, hiring their hands isn't good enough on its own. You must find a way to engage their souls and get them to bring their best efforts to the workplace each and every day.

Trust isn't a four-letter word

Companies that provide exceptional customer service unleash their employees from the constraints of an overly controlling hierarchy and allow front-line workers to serve their customers directly and efficiently. For example, while many companies devote forests of paper to employee manuals, Nordstrom, an American department store chain, devotes exactly one page to its manual.

Figure 1-1 shows you what's on that page.

We're glad to have you with our Company. Our number one goal is to provide outstanding customer service.

Set both your personal and professional goals high.

Nordstrom Rules:

Rule #1: Use your good judgement in all situations.

There will be no additional rules. Please feel free to ask your department manager, store manager, or division general manager any question at any time.

Figure 1-1: Nordstrom's employee manual shows an exceptional amount of trust in employees.

You may think that a small company with five or ten employees can get away with a policy like that, but certainly not a big company like yours. However, Nordstrom isn't a small business by any stretch of the imagination – unless you consider a company with 50,000 or so employees and more than \$5 billion in annual sales small.

How does management at a large business like Nordstrom get away with such a policy? They do it through trust.

First, Nordstrom hires good people. Second, the company gives them the training and tools to do their jobs well. Then management gets out of the way and lets the employees do their work. Nordstrom knows that it can trust its employees to make the right decisions because the company knows that it has hired the right people for the job and has trained them well.

We're not saying that Nordstrom doesn't have problems – every company does. But Nordstrom has taken a proactive stance in creating the environment that employees most need and want.

Can you say the same for your organisation?



When you trust your employees, they respond by being trustworthy. When you recognise them for being independent and responsive to your customers, they continue to be independent and responsive to your customers. And when you give them the freedom to make their own decisions, they make their own decisions. With a little training and a lot of support, these decisions are in the best interests of the company because the right people at the right level of the organisation are making them.

Explaining the New Functions of Management

Remember the four classic functions of management – plan, organise, lead and control – that you learned at college? These management functions form the foundation from which every manager works. Although these basic functions are fine for taking care of most of your day-to-day management duties, they fail to reflect the new reality of the workplace and the new partnership of managers and workers. We need a new set of management functions that builds on the four classic functions of management. And you're in luck; we have them. The following sections describe the functions of the new manager in the twenty first-century workplace.

The ultimate employee letter

In his book *Please Don't Just Do What I Tell You! Do What Needs to Be Done* (Hyperion, 2002), Bob talks about the 'Ultimate Expectation' of every employer – for employees to do what needs to be done. In the following letter from manager to employee, Bob clearly outlines this expectation.

Dear Employee:

You've been hired to handle some pressing needs we have. If we could have managed by not hiring you, we would have. But we've determined that we needed someone with your skills and experience and that you were the best person to help us with our needs. We have offered you the position and you've accepted. Thanks!

During the course of your employment, you will be asked to do many things: general responsibilities, specific assignments, group and individual projects. You will have many chances to excel and to confirm that we made a good choice in hiring you.

However, there is one foremost responsibility that may never be specifically requested of you but that you need to always keep in mind through the duration of your employment. This is the Ultimate Expectation, and it is as follows:

ALWAYS DO WHAT MOST NEEDS TO BE DONE WITHOUT WAITING TO BE ASKED.

We've hired you to do a job, yes, but more importantly, we've hired you to think, to use your judgement and to act in the best interest of the organisation at all times.

If we never say this again, don't take it as an indication that it's no longer important or that we've changed our priorities. We are likely to get caught up in the daily press of business, the

never-ending changes of the operation, and the ongoing rush of activities. Our day-to-day practices make it look like this principle no longer applies. Don't be deceived by this.

Please don't ever forget the Ultimate Expectation. Strive to have it always be a guiding principle in your employment with us, a philosophy that is always with you, one that is constantly driving your thoughts and actions.

As long as you are employed with us, you have our permission to act in our mutual best interests.

If at any time you do not feel we are doing the right thing – the thing you most believe would help us all – please say so. You have our permission to speak up when necessary to state what is unstated, to make a suggestion, or to question an action or decision.

This doesn't mean we will always agree with you, or that we will necessarily change what we are doing; but we always want to hear what you most believe would help us better achieve our goals and purpose and to create a mutually successful experience in the process.

You will need to seek to understand how (and why) things are done the way they are done before you seek to change existing work processes. Try to work with the systems that are in place first, but tell us if you think those systems need to be changed.

Discuss what is presented here with me, and others, in the organisation so that we might all become better at applying the Ultimate Expectation.

Sincerely,

Your Manager

Energise

Think of the best managers you know. What one quality sets them apart from the rest? Is it their organisational skills, their fairness or their technical ability? Perhaps their ability to delegate or the long hours they keep sets them apart.



Although all these traits may be important to a manager's success, we haven't yet named the unique quality that makes a good manager great. The most important management function is to get people excited and inspired – to *energise* them. You can't expect your people to be inspired, ambitious, enthusiastic or dedicated if you yourself aren't. Adopt the mantra: 'If it's to be, it's to begin with me.'

You can be the best analyst in the world, the most highly organised executive on the planet or fair beyond reproach, but if people can liken the level of excitement you generate more to a dishcloth than a spark plug, it handicaps your efforts to create a truly great organisation.

Great managers create far more energy than they consume. The best managers are organisational catalysts. Instead of taking energy from an organisation, they channel and amplify it. In every interaction, effective managers take the natural energy of their employees, add to it and leave the employees in a higher energy state than when they began. Management becomes a process of transmitting the excitement that you feel about your organisation and its goals to your employees in terms that they can understand and appreciate. Before you know it, your employees are as excited about the organisation as you are, and you can simply allow their energy to carry you forward.

A picture is worth a thousand words. This statement is as true for the pictures you paint in the minds of others as for the pictures people paint on canvas or print in magazines and books. Imagine taking a holiday with your family or friends. As the big day draws near, you keep the goal exciting and fresh in the minds of your family or friends by creating a vision of the journey that awaits you. Vivid descriptions of white sandy beaches, towering redwoods, glittering skylines, secluded lakes, hot food and indoor plumbing paint pictures in the minds of each of your fellow travellers. With this vision in mind, everyone works towards a common goal of having a successful holiday.



Successful managers bring everything to life. They create compelling visions – pictures of a future organisation that inspire and compel employees to bring out their best performance.

Empower

Have you ever worked for someone who didn't let you do your job without questioning your every decision? Maybe you spent all weekend working on a special project only to have it casually discarded by your boss. 'What were you thinking when you did this, Elizabeth? Our customers will never buy into that approach!' Or maybe you went out of your way to help a customer, accepting a return shipment of an item against company policy. 'Why do you think we have policies – because we enjoy killing trees for the paper to print them on? If we made exceptions for everyone, we'd go out of business!' How did it feel to have your sincere efforts at doing a great job disparaged? What was your reaction? Simple – you didn't bother making the extra effort again.

Despite rumours to the contrary, when you empower your employees, you don't stop managing. What changes is the way you manage. Managers still provide vision, establish organisational goals and determine shared values. However, they also have to establish a corporate infrastructure – skills training, teams and so on – that supports empowerment. And although all your employees may not want to be empowered, you still have to provide an environment that supports those employees who are eager for a taste of the freedom to apply their personal creativity and expertise to your organisation.



Great managers allow their employees to do great work. This role is the real and vital function of management, because even the greatest managers in the world can't succeed all by themselves.

To achieve the organisation's goals, managers depend on their employees' skills. Effective managers combine the efforts of every member of a work unit towards a common purpose. If you're constantly doing your employees' work for them, not only have you lost the advantage of the effectiveness that your employees can provide for you, you're also putting yourself on the path to stress, ulcers and worse.

When you don't empower employees, not only do you lose out, everyone in your organisation loses too. Your employees lose because you aren't allowing them to stretch themselves or to show creativity or initiative. Your organisation loses the insights that its creative workforce brings with it. Finally, your customers lose because your employees are afraid to provide them with exceptional service. Why should they if they're constantly worried about you punishing them for taking the initiative or for pushing the limits of the organisation to serve your customers better?

As William McKnight, former CEO of manufacturing giant 3M, put it, 'The mistakes people make are of much less importance than the mistakes management makes if it tells people exactly what to do.'

And as Phil McGovern, former General Manager of Panasonic UK, commented, 'Make mistakes? Of course we do. We make thousands of mistakes every day. I myself make mistakes. The important thing is that we learn from them. And we have to learn from them if we are to remain competitive.'

Support

A manager's job is no longer that of a watchdog, police officer or executioner. Increasingly, managers must be coaches, colleagues, cheerleaders and advocates for their staff. The main concern of today's managers needs to be shaping a more supportive work environment that enables each employee to feel valued and be more productive.



When the going gets tough, managers support their employees. This doesn't mean that you do everything for your employees or make their decisions for them. It does mean that you give your employees the training, resources and authority to do their jobs and then you get out of the way. You're always there for your employees to help pick up the pieces if they fall, but fall they must if they're going to learn. The idea is the same as learning to skate: if you're not falling, you're not learning.



The key to creating a supportive environment is establishing trust or openness throughout an organisation. In an open environment, employees can bring up questions and concerns. In fact, they're encouraged to do so. When the environment is truly open, an individual can express concerns without fear of retribution. Hidden agendas don't exist, and people feel free to say the same things in business meetings that they'd say after work. When employees see that their managers are receptive to new ideas, they're more likely to feel invested in the organisation, and to think of more and better ways to improve systems, to solve problems, to save money and to serve customers.

Managers also support each other. Personal fiefdoms, fighting between departments and withholding information have no place in the modern organisation; companies can't afford to support these dysfunctional behaviours. All members of the organisation – from the top to the bottom – must realise that they play on the same team. To win, team members support each other and keep their people up to date with the latest information. Which team are you on?

Communicate

Without a doubt, communication is the lifeblood of any organisation, and managers are the common element that connects different levels of employees with one another. We've seen at first hand the positive effects on a business and its



employees of managers who communicate, and the negative effects on a business and its employees of managers who don't.

Managers who don't communicate effectively are missing out on a vital role of management.

Communication is a key function for managers today. Information is power, and as the speed of business accelerates, employees must get the information they need faster than ever. Continual change and increasing turbulence in the business environment necessitate more communication, not less. Who's going to be around in five years? The manager who's mastered this function or the one who hasn't?

With the proliferation of new means of communication, managers simply have no excuse not to communicate with their employees. You can even use the telephone or try a little old-fashioned face-to-face talk with your employees if you like!



To meet the expectations that you set for them, your employees have to be aware of those expectations. A goal is great on paper, but if you don't communicate it to employees and don't keep them up to date on their progress towards achieving that goal, how can you expect them to reach it? Simply, you can't. Such a goal would be like training for the Olympics but never being given feedback on how you're doing versus the competition.



Employees often appreciate the little things – an invitation to an upcoming meeting, praise for a job well done or an insight into the organisation's finances. Not only does sharing this kind of information make a business run better, it also creates tremendous goodwill and cements the trust that bonds your employees to the organisation and to the successful completion of its goals.

Taking the First Steps towards Becoming a Manager

Believe it or not, many managers never receive formal training in management (though thankfully this is changing). In many cases management is just something that's added to your job description. One day you may be a computer programmer working on a hot new app, and the next day you may be in charge of the new development team. Before, you were expected only to show up to work and create a product. Now, you're expected to lead and motivate a group of workers towards a common goal. You may get paid more to do the job, but the only training you may get for the task is in the school of hard knocks.

Managers (or managers-to-be) can easily discover how to become good managers by following the recommendations in the following sections. No one way is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; each has its pluses and minuses.

Look and listen

If you're fortunate enough to have had a skilled teacher or mentor during the course of your career, you're treated to an education in management that's equal to or better than any Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme. You get to know at first hand the right and wrong ways to manage people. You discover what it takes to get things done in your organisation, and you realise that customer satisfaction involves more than simply giving your customers lip service.



Unfortunately, any organisation with good management also has living, breathing examples of the wrong way to manage employees. You know the ones we're talking about: the manager who refuses to make decisions, leaving employees and customers hanging. Or the boss who refuses to delegate even the simplest decision to employees. Or the supervisor who insists on managing every single aspect of a department – no matter how small or inconsequential: 'No, no, no! The stamp goes on the envelope first, and then the address label, not the other way around!' Examples of the right way to manage employees are, regrettably, still few and far between.



You can benefit from the behaviours that poor managers model. When you find a manager who refuses to make decisions, for example, carefully note the impact their management style has on workers, other managers and customers. You can feel your own frustration. Make a mental note: 'I'll never, ever demotivate another person like that.' Indecision at the top inevitably leads to indecision at all ranks of an organisation – especially when people are punished for filling the vacuum that indecisive managers leave. Employees become confused, and customers become concerned as the organisation drifts aimlessly.

Observe the manager who depends on fear and intimidation to get results. What are the real results of this style of management? Do employees look forward to coming to the office every day? Are they all pulling for a common vision and goal? Are they extending themselves to bring innovation to work processes and procedures? Or are they more concerned with just getting through the day without being yelled at? Think about what you'd do differently to get the results you want.

You can always pick up something from other managers – whether they're good managers or bad ones.

A world-class teacher

By many measures, Jack Welch is considered to be one of the United States' top business leaders. Welch, who until recently was chairman of General Electric (GE), radically transformed his company's culture while dramatically improving its performance – and in the process created some \$57 billion in value.

Although Welch did many different things to make the transformation a reality, one of the most telling was his takeover of GE's training facility in Ossining, New York. As he realised, designing a new culture is one thing, but getting the word out to employees and making it stick is another thing altogether. By directing the class curricula for all levels of workers, and by personally dropping into the training centre every two weeks or so to meet with students, Welch was able not only to determine what message would be communicated to GE employees, but also to ensure that they received the message

loudly and clearly. If the employees were confused, they had ample opportunity to ask him for clarification.

In a gesture that was at once symbolic and real, Welch directed the ceremonial burning of the old-school GE Blue Books. The Blue Books were a series of management training manuals that prescribed how GE managers were to get tasks done in the organisation. Despite the fact that the use of these books for training had been mothballed for some 15 years, they still exerted tremendous influence over the actions of GE managers. Citing the need for managers to write their own answers to day-to-day management challenges, Welch swept away the old order by removing the Blue Books from the organisation's culture once and for all. Now, GE managers are taught to find their own solutions rather than look them up in a dusty old book.

Do and learn

Perhaps you're familiar with this old saying (attributed to Lao Tze):

Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day,

Teach a man to fish, and he eats for a lifetime.



Such is the nature of managing employees. If you make all the decisions, do the work that your employees are able to do given the chance, and try to carry the entire organisation on your own shoulders, you're harming your employees and your organisation far more than you can imagine. Your employees never find out how to succeed on their own, and after a while they stop trying. In your sincere efforts to bring success to your organisation, you stunt the growth of your employees and make the organisation less effective and vital.

Top five management websites

Wondering where to find the best information about the topics we address in this chapter? Try some of our favourites:

- ✓ Chartered Management Institute: www.managers.org.uk
- ✓ Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development: www.cipd.co.uk
- ✓ ManagementFirst: www.managementfirst.com
- ✓ London Business School: www.london.edu
- ✓ Learning and Skills Council: www.lsc.gov.uk



Simply reading a book (even this one) or watching someone else manage – or fail to manage – isn't enough. To take advantage of lessons you learn, you have to put them into practice. Keep these key steps in mind:

1. Take the time to assess your organisation's problems.

Which parts of your organisation work, and which don't? Why or why not? You can't focus on all your problems at one time. Concentrate and solve a few problems that are the most important before you move on to the rest.

2. Take a close look at yourself.

What do you do to help or hinder your employees when they try to do their jobs? Do you give them the authority to make decisions? Just as important, do you support them when they go out on a limb for the organisation? Study your personal interactions throughout your business day. Do they result in positive or negative outcomes?

3. Try out the techniques that you learn from your reading or from observing other managers at work.

Go ahead! Nothing changes if you don't change first. 'If it's to be, it's to begin with me.'

4. Step back and watch what happens.

We promise that you can see a difference in the way you get tasks done and in the way your customers and employees respond to your organisation's needs and goals.

<http://www.pbookshop.com>