Management Skills
and
Leadership Development

A Book for New Managers and Leaders

as Well as Those Brushing Up on Their Skills

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Introduction

Great managers understand their role in a business and the *necessity* of strong leadership. The fact that you are reading this shows you not only have the interest and desire to succeed as a great manager but also to prosper as a strong leader. Congratulations.

You can be sure that there are many factors separating average managers from great managers. Being knowledgeable about the company's products, services and procedures is certainly an important piece of the puzzle. But, great managers know that excelling in this capacity is also about understanding and practicing essential management and leadership skills as well. This book is about much more than the simple need to fill the role of manager; it is about the need to fill that role as an *effective* manager with effective management practices.

Most often, a person becomes a manager because they have either climbed their way up the ladder with their current employer (an advancement or inside hire) or have acquired a respectable skill-set working elsewhere and appear to be a good fit with a new company (an outside hire). Other times, they ARE the ladder (ie: they created the business and are wearing this hat, among many others). Throughout this book, we use the word "manager". By this, we are referring to anyone officially acting as a manager or in a management capacity, even if that is not your "official title" (such as a business owner).

You will be presented with the management skills needed to direct your employees and the leadership skills necessary to inspire your employees. You will have the assurance and confidence to lead your team to success, share your vision and goals, be secure in your leadership capabilities, communicate professionally, hold effective meetings, delegate, give powerful presentations and so much more.

With that, let us proceed …

On Management and Leadership

Although your position as a manager, supervisor, lead, etc. gives you the authority to accomplish certain tasks and objectives in the organization, this power does not make you a leader, it simply says you're in charge. Leadership differs in that it makes the followers want to achieve goals in the best way possible and to do great things.

Management skills pertain to all the planning and coordination that is necessary to meet the company's objectives. Leadership skills, on the other hand, pertain more to the motivation, inspiration, trust, vision and senses of purpose necessary to believe in those goals. In harmony, they translate to effectiveness with a real sense of spirit, drive and accomplishment.

As a manager you need to be directive, action-oriented and responsive. As a leader you need to be proactive and creative. As a manager, you need to make sure each individual has the skills necessary to achieve the goals at hand. As a leader, you must get your organization to believe that the work and goals at hand (and of the company in general) are worthwhile.

In a sense, the manager in you is responsible for getting the individual to be a part of the big picture and the leader in you is responsible for getting that individual, along with a group, to see and believe in the big picture. Make sense?

Many managers think at first that managing others will be an extension of managing themselves. They assume they will be doing what they did previously, except they will exercise more control over their work and the work of others. Instead, they find they must make a great leap into a new and strange universe unlike anything they've encountered before. This is especially true if you're a producing manager who must combine the roles of individual contributor and manager. At first, you naturally tend to think the managerial role is simply a broader version of managing yourself. Only with time and painful experience will you discover it's totally different.

Becoming an effective manager also requires that you not only acquire new skills and knowledge but also undergo personal change. Those who become managers must learn to see themselves and their work differently. They must develop new values, deeper self-awareness, increased emotional maturity, and the ability to exercise wise judgment. Many managers, for example, are accused of being control freaks because they don't delegate. But a desire for control often isn't the problem. Instead, it's an issue of identity. For one thing, they are often still negotiating the identity issue--getting out of the role of the doer and into the role of the agenda-setter.

As you redefine your role, keep in mind that the moves you make now may also open you up to scrutiny (and sometimes, misinterpretation). If you've had an awful morning and are abrupt during a staff meeting, half the room will think you're about to fire them and the other half will be upset that you haven't appreciated their successes. Because of this, managers need to be conscious of and deliberate about their behaviors. You have to understand the impact you have on your people.

As you have probably seen, many effective leaders are deeply admired by the people they lead as a result of their unique interpersonal skills. However, the leaders who are willing to take the heat, accept risks, and make decisions under fire also make people want to follow them. Their courage, intelligence, and decisiveness can impress others and inspire confidence.

You should also know that it is key to never become too complacent with the business model itself, its processes and procedures, no matter how sound and well crafted. Every aspect of business is a work in progress. The most successful leaders continually look to improve their department's performance. They continue to learn and find self-improvement, do things better, keep spreading information throughout their organization and improving the skills and abilities of their employees. You should embrace the process of discovery by never giving up the quest for information.

So how do we get started? Let's first try to lay down nine basic rules for strong management and leadership that need to be followed consistently and with conviction:

Develop trust and credibility. When people trust you, they will be more inclined to follow you. A leader builds trust by considering the "good of all" when making decisions. Leaders do not abuse their power, but build trust by using it properly. Trust fosters collaboration, which contributes to openly sharing information, which then creates a solid team who supports each other. Trust is based on the respect and expectations of a leader who cares and acts with compassion in a most positive way. You must be honest, have integrity, be fair, and make it a point to nurture relationships. Managing by fear only has a short-term effect that quickly sabotages other efforts. Real leaders know that inspires no one.

Be up front with everyone - Trying to mask the truth will only cause more anxiety and distrust in leaders. Telling it like-it-is is generally well received when people know you're being honest with them. Be yourself while always maintaining a professional persona.   People deal with situations, good or bad, when they feel you are being honest in a professional yet personable way.

Share the vision with clarity. Leaders need to share the vision of what they want to achieve in the long run. Define what success should look like.   That is extremely important, so we will restate it: Define what success should look like. Everyone may have a different definition of what success might be, so get others to see and understand your vision. People with a shared vision are more productive and have a greater sense of achievement. Inspire them to follow the processes and procedures you will put in place to achieve that vision. Too, define not just the ultimate vision, but what the tasks they are charged with should look like as well. Make sure you are each on the same page.

Listen to them. You don't have to agree with them, but if you expect them to follow you and empower you to manage and lead (yes, you read that right, an effective staff does actually grant you power to lead them and that is exactly what you are coaxing out of them), you need to let them feel the respect of having their voices heard. Never be dismissive once they do express themselves.   By encouraging ideas, suggestions, criticisms, and feedback, you and your employees will have a much better chance of fixing problems. Better yet, if you start your management approach with this mindset, many of those problems may not appear in

the first place. And remember – some people are not very comfortable asking for help. You need to listen for other signs that maybe you should check-in with them.

Always give them hope. Keep a vigilant eye, check in on them and when you see it is appropriate, make sure they know with certainty that there is a light at the end of a tunnel. Hope keeps everyone moving forward. Likewise, always keep the communication line open whether in person, chat, phone call, or e-mail. There will be times when you are so busy that you will forget to talk to your staff. Don't be so involved in your own projects that you end up ignoring the hard work performed by your staff or the walls they may be running into.

Get them excited about results. Rally the troops as a whole to find at least one common goal for all, and then focus a shared vision around that commonality. By providing a clear and shared hope, keeping everything under control, being someone they can count on, and someone they respect who respects them back, you will be seen as an effective leader.

Be there to help them succeed. Be their coach and mentor. Be out there and find the strengths and talents of your employees and staff. Place them where they can shine, but also be careful to place them where they can grow. Help people grow their skills and develop their careers. You do this through training, providing opportunities, and spreading the word through upper management. This will make you the person people want to work for. When employees feel they are learning and growing, they work harder and more efficiently. Don't let them become bored and stagnant or else they will become sluggish, both personally and professionally. Challenge and empower your employees with tasks, projects, and assignments. You will both win, they will continue improving and you will be getting more work done.

Build their confidence when they are unsure about themselves, bring them out of their shell when they are shy, and help with reporting and process skills when they are not documentation experts. By helping your employees learn and grow, you will have more people in which you can delegate tasks. This in turn gives you more time to focus on other aspects of improving your department, which is another win/win situation. To be sure, they need to know that you will be there to help them succeed.

Furthermore, you need to balance the skills and capabilities of your employees. Give people the freedom to make mistakes, but make sure they learn, regroup, and try again. Don't ignore the mistakes; just don't bring out the sword.

Be accountable. One of the worse things you can do as a manger is to try to let someone else take the fall for your direction or lack thereof. As a leader, you are expected to take some chances and you might make some risky decisions. This is part and parcel of the position. If your people know you will take responsibility … and share in the successes as well, they will be willing to go further for you instead of "playing it safe". What you don't want is for everyone to feel they must play a game of "C.Y.A." out of fear they will be blamed for something they didn't do, or were instructed (or not instructed) to do. Likewise, just as you should be accountable, you should reinforce the same philosophy with your staff. Don't be fooled, if you don't lead by example, you can't expect them to follow in any other direction.

Remember to be visible. Being visible, as a rule of thumb – not the exception - is an effective way to express confidence and calm employees during stressful events. You simply cannot reach your potential as a trusted and well-liked manager/leader from behind closed doors. Be there for them and always let them know you have their back. Always keep their best interests at heart. The more you do for them, the more they will follow your lead.

Always remember that effective management and effective leadership are both art forms once intertwined. They are the result of intentional, well-crafted actions that come from both knowledge and emotion. The same attributes that distinguish great from mediocre artists distinguish exceptional leaders from their ordinary counterparts. The best leaders and artists challenge, excite, comfort, and motivate.

Now that we are clear on the relationship between management and leadership and understand that great managers know that excelling in this capacity is also about understanding and practicing essential management and leadership skills, we will continue to explore effective management and leadership techniques that build on the nine foundations that you have been presented with.

Effective Management and Leadership Techniques

There are many different academic styles of management and leadership. But, the right style of leadership depends on the situation. As a manager, as a leader, you need to adjust your leadership style to the situation you find yourself in. If you can't be flexible in your leadership style, you will fail. The right style of management and leadership depends on the situation. As a manager, as a leader, you need to adjust your style to the situation you find yourself in and the people you are in it with. Especially in today's workforce, you must also keep a vigilant eye out for what motivates your people. That is why the intent of this book is to introduce you to the basic precepts that apply to today's work environment. That is why this book doesn't present you with "Style A" or "Theory B". Follow these recommendations and you will surely be on the road to becoming an effective manager and leader.

To add the nine pillars presented in the previous chapter, we will briefly discuss some proven practices and techniques that will immediately help get you started on the path to successful, effective management. These valuable skills are part of the everyday life of a successful manager and leader. They are not in any particular order of importance, as they are all extremely valuable.

Likely, you have met or worked with someone whose leadership skills you thought were admirable. It could have been a boss, a teacher, a friend or a relative who you admired as a person with respectable leadership characteristics. Someone who inspired you to want to work hard, to not only try to impress, but to show you cared about the mission at hand. Study how they made the right and effective decisions using certain facts, opinions, and ideas. Look for the leadership qualities you would like to incorporate into your leadership style and try to emulate them. A common characteristic of highly effective people is that have been able to identify mentors and incorporate what they have learned from them into their own persona.

Show confidence in the decisions you make. You should confidently be able to say that you are not opposed to make changes if it is for the greater good.

Remember though, you are the orchestrator. Upper management will notice the way you handle these types of situations with the courage in standing by your decisions and the courage to know when to make a change.

Be straightforward and always look others in the eyes. People like an honest answer from someone they trust, even when you do not know the answer. This not only goes for your employees but for interactions with upper management as well. Eye contact is important. You may be busy, but we have all felt the chill of speaking with someone when there is no eye contact. It cheapens the exchange, and credibility is lost. Wouldn't you agree?

Ask good questions. Use inquiry and support in such a way as to keep your people abreast of what is really going on. Consider the "70-20-10 Rule" in conversations: 70 per cent listening, 20 per cent inquiry and 10 per cent tracking (i.e., summarizing and synthesizing information, and providing possible courses of action).

You are going to make mistakes. That is inevitable. But it is also okay as long as you learn from them. You must be able to let mistakes go and not obsess over them enough to affect your psyche. A good leader takes calculated risks. A confident leader moves on, always remember that. The same holds true for those you are in charge of.

You will build subconscious respect as a leader amongst your team when you look and dress in a professional manner. You never know when there might be an upper management meeting, surprise visit by the CEO or a visit from an important customer. You need to always be ready to represent your department, both in appearance and knowledge.

You should also keep an eye on presenting yourself professionally; even at parties. There will be times when you attend an office party or event where drinking is involved. Keep it to a minimum. A couple times a year is fun and exciting for all. A lot can also be said for letting your subordinates know that you have a fun side, but a good leader knows when to walk away with his or her integrity still in tack.

Be passionate, enthusiastic and optimistic about the objectives and organization as a whole. It is contagious. When you become passionate about a task, project, or departmental goal, your team will also become passionate. These are three key ingredients to being exceptional, not just good enough. Be passionate and your team is sure to follow.

Be ethically sound. Always practice good business ethics and you will not get caught up in any troubles. Sounds simple, but this is extremely important. Basically, do not lie to your staff, ignore your customers, let faulty product or services go out the door, or misuse company property, etc.

Try not to ever talk negatively about customers or other departments. It is easy to criticize and complain, but you don't want those following your lead to get into a habit of doing the same. Also, never backstab anyone. Even if you feel somehow justified, make no mistake: a person who is known as a backstabber will never be known as a solid, effective leader.

You must also be able to take criticism. How you react to being criticized tells a lot about your strength in management. Your first reaction may be to take criticism personally, but keep tabs on your emotions. Really listen to what others have to say. If they are good points, be sure to acknowledge and address them in a professional, and even thankful, manner. If they are bad points, calmly state your objections, but ensure you will take the points into consideration. Remember too, we all want to be heard. That doesn't mean, though, that you are immune from hearing scrutiny.

Always be on time to work and for any appointments. If you show up late, you will slowly start seeing your supervisors and staff showing up late. This is a contagious habit that you do not want others to pick up. Build respect as a leader by being on time, or better yet, a few minutes early to work and appointments. Others will follow your example.

Face up to non-performing players. Great leaders do not tolerate players who pull the team apart. Never let anyone be a cancer to your team. We are not suggesting outright termination, but are suggesting that you do not even give

repressive behaviors an opportunity to infiltrate your efforts. Address them immediately.

See your projects through to completion with no loose ends. Your staff should be doing the same with their tasks. Always make a final review. Check in, support and acknowledge a job well done. This builds reputation, trust and confidence. Enough said.

Always look to reduce redundancy whenever possible. When employees have to make repeated entries or duplicate tasks, it breaks their morale - for example, when someone has to enter the same data in multiple databases. Find ways to tie things together. Determine what is not necessary. Not only is this a management responsibility, but it will also help you gain respect as a leader as you eliminate future redundancy within the department.

Be cognizant of your communications, be they written, oral or even those of body language. We will talk more about communication later.

One the most basic management skills that's often least used by first-time managers is delegating. After all, when you complete a task yourself you have complete control over the outcome. However, by not delegating you're doing both yourself and your staff a disservice. Part of being a manager is applying more strategic and critical thinking skills to the work your department is doing. Delegating helps minimize the amount of tactical work you're doing so you can focus on the bigger picture. The key is learning to identify which tasks are best left to the skills of your staff and which ones require more involvement from you.

Know Your GPM.   In Management, GPM is an acronym for Goals, Plans, and Metrics. To achieve your goals, you must first determine what your Goals are. Then you have to develop a Plan that gets you to your goal. Finally you need Metrics (measurements) to know if you are moving toward your goal according to your plan.

We could go on forever, but you should now have a firm base from which to proceed. It is worth adding though, to have fun. Management and leadership,

when done effectively, can provide personal fulfillment you won't find anywhere else.

(Chapter 4 begins on the next page)

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Managing Objectives – The Game Plan

Now it is time to start taking a look at managing your objectives, be they the goals you must meet in a very short time frame or the larger objectives you are responsible for. In order to accomplish this, you will need to have a good strategic and tactical plan. Sounds daunting, maybe, but this simply means that you will need a basic roadmap on where you are now, where you are going and what he best route to get there is. Finally, you would need to make sure you have the means to reach your final destination. For example, if providing excellent customer service were your main objective, you would need to come up with a strategy to make sure the customers are satisfied in every way. This is where managing and organizing your people comes into play.

In this Chapter, we will look at a systematic way to set up your game plan for optimum performance.

To begin with, you need to fully understand what is expected of you as a manager. You need to know what products and/or services you are supporting, what the goals and objectives are of the company and what the goals and objectives are of your department. Once all of that has been determined, you can start on creating a well-organized, planned and controlled game plan.

Too, be aware that when you and your staff don't have a good grasp on the products or services your company provides, more mistakes, less confidence and wasted energy is inevitable. How can you expect your team to support a new product release or service offering when they are not even certain about the existing products and services that are being offered?

Below is a 10 step process for planning and building a group to best meet the goals of the project and organization:
(Before you start reading, recognize that the below process assumes a chain of command you might find in larger businesses with several grades of management. The process is basically the same even for a small practice with

only one manager. It even holds for sole proprietors with employees. The proprietor, in this case, is simply wearing a few different hats.)

Step 1 of the process is the identification of the part everyone plays in the company's goals and objectives. Goals and objectives could include a new product or service the company wants to produce or provide. Targeting new markets, raising capital, increasing sales or customer satisfaction could be as well. How that is supposed to happen needs to be determined. Perhaps it is through research and development, market analysis, the implementation of financial strategies, new sales territories or a new customer service process.

Step 2: The Company's goals and objectives should be communicated down the line to all managers. In a small business, this may happen in the boss' office. In businesses with several managers, this usually occurs in a meeting with upper management. You need to know exactly what it is upper management expects from you.

Step 3: Department Managers (we will use this term going forward to include anyone responsible for a team of people) will take their part of the plan and fully digest its goals and objectives - both general and specific. (A general goal might be to answer calls quickly. A specific goal could be to answer all calls in an average of 30 seconds.)

Step 4: With that information, start planning on how to accomplish the task at hand. Create a timeline for completion of the initiative as well as its steps. The timeline needs to be challenging yet attainable. Map out the plan from start to finish with a description of each task and projected completed dates. Think about the saying, "Under promise and over deliver." What might look amazing to upper management at first could come back to haunt you when you miss your target date. Depending on the type of business, a simple spreadsheet will normally do.

Step 5: The manager should then create a summary of the tasks associated with the plan and clearly state the assignments, roles, goals and objectives to communicate in the next step.

Step 6: Staffing: Identify the people for the roles that you need fill in order to meet the objective. The tricky part is to have the right person for the right job. If you have been out on the floor getting to know your employees, knowing their strengths and weaknesses, trusting in your supervision staff and knowing your top performers, you should be able to find the right people for the job.

Step 7: Any necessary further training should be scheduled and provided at this point. It should also become part of the processes to be used for future projects/goals as well.

Step 8: As may be applicable, you should first share this information with your key staff members like your supervisors, leads, etc. There may be just one big project that requires your full attention, or many smaller projects working concurrently. In most cases it is both. It is important that you prioritize the most crucial projects. You need to be able to make the right call.

Step 9: You need to make sure your staff has all the tools it needs to get the job done right such as efficient equipment, materials, and supplies. Pay attention to things like whether your staff has good working computers with plenty of disk space and memory. Nothing is worse than having a slow computer, especially while on the phone with a customer or someone is waiting for your work product.

Continually communicating with your staff is the key to finding out what they need to make things run more efficiently. Many managers assume everyone has what they need because they do not ask for anything. However, they might think it is too trivial or that they do not want to waste your time with small requests. Don't let this happen to you. Encourage your staff to look for any improvements that can make their lives a little easier.

Step 10: *Monitor, monitor and monitor. Check results against your game plan often. Review completed tasks. Any hitches should be addressed immediately.

Note that in practice, status reports and updates are often given to upper management along the way.

Utilizing all that has been taught in this lesson will help build your value and effectiveness as a manager. A department that is structured to achieve its goals is key to being a successful manager. Following through on your well thought out plans will show off your management and leadership skills, it will also earn you a great deal of respect.

(Chapter 5 begins on the next page)

Managing Your Staff and Building Strong Teams

Great managers know how to make people function in a collaborative fashion. They know how to mold them to think as a team and how to motivate them to exceed the level of performance they might otherwise realize as individuals. Great teams know what is expected of them. The members coordinate their activities and contribute their often diverse skills and resources to accomplish a common goal."

"Coordinate activities" suggests that there should be a harmonious and organized plan for orchestrating the efforts of everyone involved. "Diverse skills and resources" suggests that the team is built with different and complementary parts. Creative contributions from different backgrounds, skill sets, and team personality types can offer ideas that a homogenous group might not.

To have the best team, however, you also need to get the most out of the individuals. You can get the most out of your employees by learning how to best manage them. Once you get the most out of each individual, a strong team will start to develop with respect and purpose. For this reason, we will begin this lesson talking about building strong individuals and then move onto basic tools for teambuilding.

Motivating people to do their best work, consistently, has been an enduring challenge for managers. Even understanding what constitutes human motivation has been a centuries old puzzle, addressed as far back as Aristotle. There are a great many theories and disciplines directly related to this. In fact, so many that it is far beyond the scope of this Chapter. However, we can set some basic rules in motion to help you effectively build strong individuals.
First and foremost, makes sure they receive all the training they need. This could be technical skills, computer skills, communication skills, etc. It is very difficult for individuals to face challenges in these areas on an ongoing basis. It demotivates and usually directly effects the level of involvement required of others. It is an empowering thing to feel confident – so help them feel that way.

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You also need to be sure the individual knows what resources are available at the company and how to access them. Similarly, we all (well, most of us!) have an innate need to continue learning and to change things up every now and again. For this reason, make sure to expose your staff to new projects, tools, experiences, etc. Boredom and complacency will never result in maximum performance.

Your people need to know what is potentially ahead for them as well. Let them know what opportunities there are for growth. Sometimes forgotten, this ingredient is an important motivation for people. Keep in mind too, if you have control over this, that job titles often tap into one's self-esteem. How someone feels about the way they are perceived in the workforce is a critical component to overall attitude and morale. Picture a social gathering that includes some of your staff. The subject of work inevitably comes up. Will your people be proud or embarrassed to share their title? The importance of feeling proud of who you are and what you do is monumental.

Of importance to employees, as well, is their working condition. In industry studies, employers were asked to rank what they thought motivated their people and then employees were asked to rank what really motivates them. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the most important and 10 being the least important, employers felt "working conditions" was a at the bottom of the list in terms of importance – a 9, while employees rated it as being of high importance: a 2! Working conditions are very important to the way employees feel about where they work. What control do you have over this? If you can't directly affect it, can you bring situations and ideas to your superiors?

You should also make it a habit to dispense recognition and praise. Do so when earned and on-the-spot. Promptness equals effectiveness. Praise people when the achievement is fresh in mind. If possible, don't allow time to creep in and snatch away an ounce of the positive impact that praise can have when it is delivered promptly. Positive reinforcement is a great behavioral modification tool. Another form of positive recognition is applause. Physically applaud your people by giving them a round of applause for specific achievements. Where?

When? The answer is wherever and whenever. You can do so at meetings or company-sponsored social gatherings, a luncheon or in the office. At the end of a shift, in the middle of a shift, before a shift – whenever appropriate. They try hard – recognize it.

Give your people leadership roles to reward their performance. Most people are stimulated by leadership roles even in spot appearances. These do not have to be positional; there are many informal and short-term roles. For example, when visitors come to your workplace use this opportunity to allow an employee to take the role of visitors guide. A great place to hand out leadership roles is to allow your people to lead brief meetings or parts thereof. Utilize your employees' strengths and skills by letting one of your people have the floor. Many accounting and legal firms send their staff to take continuing professional education seminars and then return to brief the other employees regarding seminar content and highlights.

In his book Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, author Daniel H. Pink writes that the crash of Wall Street is a striking example of the peril of motivating employees strictly with gobs of cash. He advises that instead, companies should create conditions for employees to find the joy in work itself. That can mean giving workers the autonomy to choose what they do and with whom, which can help foster a desire for mastery of tasks and skill sets – and simply doing more, better. Is this under your control? Does it make sense to do so? It may not be the case in every circumstance, but perhaps you can find times when you can provide an amount of autonomy.
Lastly, as a manager, always show respect, persuade them to develop personal goals, be explicit in your instructions and always ask for confirmation that the directives are clear, provide employee evaluations/reviews and coach them whenever possible.

If you have an employee who is performing below expectations, you need to find ways to improve them. This could be because they are still fairly new, were previously a good employee who is losing their way or because they were recently promoted and are still growing. You might want to give a 30 or 60-day

action plan to improve along with a follow up meeting to discuss. If, however, you have an employee who is just non-retainable even though you've coached all you could, repeatedly spoke to them about their bad attitude or their performance is just not acceptable anymore, it may be time to terminate the employee or move his/her job function. A poor employee is an unnecessary expense for the business and can ruin a team.

With strong members, we can now turn our attention to building strong teams.

Make sure the team is set and ready to go. You need to first make sure you have planned, organized, and structured your department to its maximum potential. Once structured, you will most likely have sub-team goals: "mini-teams" that are working on part of a larger project. The ideal is to have a technically competent person who is also a people orientated team lead. The point here is to have someone in the group, or in the sub-group, who can help build teamwork by being there to help their team address the everyday type of issues. This person might just be you if the department is not very big. If you do have your department structured in a way that has sub-teams, make sure everyone understands the goal of being part of one big team.

Think about creating and communicating a one or two paragraph mission statement. This is what you want the department to be known for and what you want engraved into the minds of every employee. The department's goals and mission must have meaning for your employees. They should be involved in creating the mission with simple declarative sentences. The mission statement should come across, as making it seem like their job is truly important to the success of the company. Your people should be very clear about how the groups/departments goals fit into the overall objectives of the organization. If you are in charge of a smaller group, you can still do this; just do so in a very informal way if that is more appropriate. The most important thing is simply that you want to make them feel connected to the company and their purpose rather than just seeing their job as just a place to pick up a paycheck.

Teach them how to work as a team. Talk to your people about how important it is that there is support amongst team members with respect for one another. Team members need to rely on other team members to accomplish the work or the goals of the team, which is the basic principle of team spirit. Explain to the team why their part in obtaining the departmental goals is also part of the big picture within the company's goals. They will listen to you as you are their manager and more importantly, especially in this aspect, their leader.

Remember, you will encounter many different types of people during your management career. If you are managing a group of around 20 or less, you really should be able to get a feel for each individual's personality. Even if you manage a group of one hundred, you should still be able to know the key players personalities. It helps when you know what makes each one of them tick, especially when communicating one-on-one. When dealing with different personalities, be tolerant of styles different from your own. Always try to adapt to their personality to get your point across or to get more out of them. Equally important, you need to pay attention to matching or complimentary personality and work styles within your group(s) and pair accordingly.   For more information on behavioral and personality styles, we recommend an internet search, which will yield a significant amount of summaries for you.

Support the differing strengths of your teammates. Allow each person to bring their unique qualities to the table. There can be some new and innovative techniques and processes that can lead to doing things in new and different ways. Also, encourage the team to come up with improvements to existing processes, ideas on troubleshooting, etc. If you build the right type of team, you can trust what is presented to you and you can give it your blessing. This is a great motivational tool as well.

Hold periodic group/team meetings. For example, hold weekly meetings to go over the goals and share the direction in which the team is heading. Go over items such as performance based stats, sales, customer compliments (and complaints…), needed materials, training requests, and any other pertinent information.   The point is that you want to always keep your team well

informed and not left in the dark as well as provide a forum to get group consensus on a difficulty or issue. Let's not forget this often provides opportunity for a brain-storming session when advantageous.

Make sure your team members are not afraid to speak up. If no one speaks up or contributes anything during a meeting, there are potential ideas that will not be shared, or even worse, there may be problems that are not identified. You want any ideas or concerns to be dealt with right then and there. Make sure you stress that you want people to share even if they might create some waves. You also want to make the timid people feel comfortable to participate. Let them know that their contribution to the team is just as important as anyone else's opinions.

There are many different team building activities out there. They range from simple office activities or parties to ones of much larger scales. They range from lunches, to outings, to retreats and beyond. These exceed the scope of this book but you should be aware they exist, are extremely valuable and that we encourage you to do some reading and incorporate accordingly.

Lastly, remember that Team Building is not a one-time activity. Be prepared to continually work on improvements, ideas, functions, etc. Just calling a group of people a team does not necessarily mean they are working in harmony as a team. This should be looked at as a continuous ongoing project.

Dealing With Conflicts and Difficult Employees

You, as manager, need to do your best to make sure your department is running like a well-oiled "team-machine". Inevitably, though, conflicts, disagreements, and differences of opinion may surface and harmony within the team disrupted. There might be legal consequences in certain situations. In some cases it may even be time to fire the individual.

Conflict is a normal and natural part of our workplace and personal lives. Conflict can be helpful in making necessary changes within the work environment. However, unresolved conflict can result in feelings of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, hopelessness, depression, and other emotions. It can result in behaviors such as physical or emotional withdrawal, resignation from jobs, dissolution of personal relations, aggression, and even violence.

Your job as manager goes beyond just making sure you hit the numbers. You sometimes need to be a counselor or mediator. In most cases, using good old common sense will get you through the issue at hand. You should be the first line of defense, as you might be able to handle the situation by just listening and showing some compassion. You should, however, never be afraid to ask for HR's help whenever needed.

Communication is both the cause of and the remedy for conflict. Understanding how to effectively communicate and how to satisfactorily resolve disputes can lead to a happier, more productive environment. Communication and conflict resolution skills must be learned. The workplace setting is fertile breeding ground for conflicts because of the dynamics and interdependency of the employee-to-employee, customer-to-employee, and employee-to-outside vendor relationships. Recognizing and addressing the factors that give rise to the potential for conflict can have a positive impact on productivity in the workplace.

Put another way, conflict often arises from a clash of perceptions, goals, or values in an arena where people care about the outcome. The breeding ground for conflict may lie in confusion about or disagreement with the common purpose and how to achieve it while also achieving individual goals within an organization. It also often occurs when there is competition for limited (internal and external) resources.

The basic components of conflict are:

(a) two or more persons are involved,
(b) there is a perceived incompatibility between ideas, actions, beliefs, or goals,
.. and
(c) the opposing sides see their way as the only way to achieve their goals and objectives.

Conflict occurs as a result of two or more people interacting together. There are generally two types of conflict in the work place. They are Substantive Conflict and Personality-Based Conflict.

Substantive Conflict can be dealt with by addressing the specific problem that is the subject of the conflict. For example, Sue cannot complete her report until Linda gets all of the numbers to her. Sue believes that Linda procrastinates until the last minute, forcing her to do a rushed job which increases her stress and makes her fear that she will look bad to the boss. Linda, on the other hand, feels like Sue puts too much pressure on both of them and sets unrealistic deadlines. As the conflict increases, the productivity and efficiency decrease. These types of problems can be solved by simple mediation on your part.

Personality-Based Conflicts are a little more difficult. The trick is teaching employees how to appropriately talk with each other. The use of good communication skills is essential in keeping the peace at work. Unfortunately, most of us are not born with good communication skills and, therefore, we must learn them. It is your job to try to pair people, if possible, the best you can with personality as one of (many) considerations, to have the most effective

producers. The personalities don't necessarily need to match, but the individuals do need to have a propensity for handling other personalities in a communicative and fair fashion. Sometimes the crew is not of your selection. This is, particularly, when you should intervene to educate when necessary.

Ineffective managers employ the ostrich technique in dealing with conflict. They bury their heads in the sand and try to ignore it. However, this does nothing to improve the situation. When conflict is driven underground, it only grows and will stay underground until it is so intense that an explosion may the next step.

Some Employee Conflict Techniques:

One simple, general way to handle many conflicts simply requires you as a brief intermediary. It is as follows:

Identify the Problem. Make sure everyone involved knows exactly what the issue is and why they're arguing. Allow each person to clarify their perspectives and opinions, giving equal time for them to express their thoughts. It's your responsibility to make sure everyone feels safe and supported, and that no one feels ganged up on. Talk things through until everyone agrees on what exactly the problem is.

Restate the problem and its nature as an objective party. Don't force solutions before the situation is clear.

Next, identify the ideal end result from each party's point of view. Personal prejudices and separate agendas need to be removed from the mix.
It's often the case everyone agrees? If not, identify bigger-picture, long-term goals that mean that conflicts arise over small differences in style, rather than substance, when everyone is really trying to achieve the same goals. Is there some part of the issue on which something to everyone and start from there. Encourage all to think about what they'd be comfortable giving up to reach the agreed-upon goals together.

You then need to figure out what can realistically be done to achieve everyone's goals. If action is taken, how will this affect the company's projects and objectives? Will the end result be worth the time and energy spent? If the attempt fails, what's the worst that can happen?

Disagreement often goes hand in hand with water cooler politics and internal lobbying. If you suspect that employees are making side deals to get support for their agendas, do your best to ignore these shenanigans and keep an objective perspective about the issues at hand.

A little forethought can go a long way toward preventing conflicts among coworkers. To minimize the incidence of spats, bring issues out in the open before they become problems. Informal counseling provides managers and supervisors with an effective means of addressing and managing conflict in the workplace. This may take the form of meetings, negotiation/mediation sessions, or other dispute-resolution processes. Informal resolution of complaints at any stage of the process also provides managers with a no-fault, low- or no-cost means of restoring harmony and productivity to the organization.

Violence in the workplace is an escalated form of conflict with serious ramifications. It can be a threat of force, shove, fistfights, etc. Whatever the form, it's potentially dangerous and can expose several parties to differing lawsuits. Even the bully who intimidates is a threat of sorts. These situations create low morale and damage productivity.

If you or your staff sees emotional outbursts, co-workers confronting each other, employees confronting authority figures or even unusual social behavior, you need to address the situation as soon as possible. First try talking to the individual in private to get an understanding of the emotional outburst. It might be related to the stress of the job, which is something you can control. If it is an emotional issue beyond your control, get in touch with HR.

The main point here is to defuse the situation before it escalates. Bring the person into your office and talk it out. You do not need to be a psychologist, just be there to listen and provide as much insight as you can. Again, do not be afraid to utilize HR if it is something beyond what you can control.

You also want to defuse the bully by establishing the fact that such behavior is not tolerated as part of the company's values. State this calmly and not let in to what the bully is seeking, which is intimidation. In most cases a person is a bully because of their own fears and low self-esteem. The best thing you can do when dealing with a bully is to never let them succeed by getting good performance results due to the bullying of others. If they truly do good work that is not the result of intimidating others, praise the good work as you normally would. If the bully sees that you are monitoring and recognize good results, based on true achievement or by intimidation, the bullying should hopefully subside either way.

Whenever you speak to an employee, whether it relates to bulling, anger or violence, always be sure to document everything that transpired. You would need to give, at the very least, a verbal warning. Depending on the severity, an incident report may be written up by you or HR.

Dealing with Difficult Employees

Unfortunately, even when you think you have the best staff, have tried to create a strong team environment, trained, coached and motivated, there is still the chance you will have a difficult employee or two. One who:

- Calls out sick and rides the time off policies to the very edge.
- Does the absolute minimum work expected
- Testing and criticizing the office policies in place
- Gossiping
- Backstabs fellow employees.
- Controls a situation by using negativity.
- Has a bad attitude.

- Conducts themselves poorly.

No one likes to have to deal with these types of problem employees but when you have an employee who is disruptive, has a bad attitude, or is quite frankly a "bad apple," you need to deal with him or her as soon as possible. You will lose the respect of your team if you do not deal with the situation. Don't wait, it will only get worse. What has already been broken may even have gotten beyond repair.

In these cases, you need to have a serious discussion with the person but not necessarily an accusatory one. Get all of the facts and bring that person into your office without making a big scene. Be honest, upfront and discuss what you are seeing and how important it is to have the whole department working in "harmony". Simply ask if there is anything wrong, or if there is something happening in the workplace that is causing what is perceived as "a person with a bad attitude who is unhappy at work."

Use a lot of "I" statements like, "I need to make sure the department is working in harmony," or "I cannot accept bad behavioral problems in the department." Try not to focus on the person and say, "You need to...", though eventually you will need to make clear exactly what needs to be changed.

Make sure to communicate the effect this person's actions is having on the rest of the staff/group/team as well as the goals at all levels. You should get a verbal commitment about their intent to change the behaviors/actions and, where appropriate, a descriptive picture of how they are going to do that. When necessary, communicate how you will measure their corrective actions.
Document and date this conversation as a verbal warning. This is not a written warning, but shows that you did talk to the person about difficult employee issues. The more you document, the easier it will be to terminate if it gets to that point. The biggest mistake is to not document. Documentation and building a case is the proof that shows you talked to this employee many times but to no avail.

If it gets to the point where you have tried everything mentioned above and the employee is still not willing to change behavioral problems, then you need to begin suspension and/or termination procedures in accordance with your company's policies. This may be something you do, something your superior does, or may be the job of HR. Either way, it is an action you must initiate. As mentioned above, you will lose the respect of your team if you do not deal with the situation. Recognizing issues in the workplace can and will have a positive impact on productivity and harmony.

(Chapter begins on next page)

Delegating, Multitasking and Prioritizing

As a manager, you will find yourself continually juggling many tasks and projects. If you try to take on every project yourself, you will most likely end up missing deadlines and ineffectively prioritizing. This is why delegating is one of the most important aspects of being a successful manager.

Some managers make the mistake to not delegate because they think that if they hold all of the cards, they are indispensable. On the contrary, you are more indispensable when you show your leadership skills by delegating. You are more likely to get praised or even promoted when you show your leadership skills and not because you know something that someone else doesn't know.

Effective delegation can benefit everyone in the organization. Delegation can improve quality of work by allowing the employees who have direct knowledge of products and services to make decisions and complete tasks. Quality can also improve through enhanced employee motivation. Employees may do a better job because they feel a personal accountability for the outcome, even though responsibility ultimately rests with the individual who made the delegation.

Improper delegation, on the other hand, can cause a host of problems, primary of which is an incorrectly completed task, which may hurt the overall productivity of the organization. Additionally, the careers of the manager and subordinate may suffer. The manager is likely to take the blame for delegating the wrong task, delegating to the wrong person, or not providing proper guidance. The subordinate may also take the blame for doing the task incorrectly. For these reasons, we will send a little time on this area.

An important part of delegating is making the right decisions such as; who will be best suited for the project? How many people are needed? How long it should take?

Before you delegate, first ask yourself these three questions:

1. Can this project or task be delegated and do you have the staff that can honestly do the work required?

2. Should it be delegated or is it too critical and truly needs your involvement?

3. Do you have enough time to delegate the job effectively and explain the expectations and outcome?

If you can answer yes to the above, then start by picking the person (people) best suited for the task(s). First, assess the skills and capabilities of the person to be sure that individual can actually accomplish the task. Does he/she have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities? If not, the person might need training or, perhaps, the task should be delegated to someone else.

You should also be aware of whether that the assignee can work independently or if they need an acceptable level of supervision. It is up to you to determine their strengths and whether they can get the job done efficiently and effectively. The good news about delegation is having someone you trust do the work, however, you are still held accountable for the outcome. If they can't work independently or don't reasonably have the requisite skills, the person may continually asks questions to the point where you end up doing most of the work. This is called "reverse delegation." Through time, you end up taking on some if not all of the duties you gave the person. You end up spending more time on the project than you would if you have just did it yourself from the beginning. This is not to say that there isn't a place for delegation when a secondary intent is training and the acquisition of experience, but you need to pick and choose those times carefully with an eye on your time-budget.

Clearly specify your preferred results. Provide information on what the results should look like, why those results are desired, when the results should be accomplished, who else might help the person and what resources the person has to work with. You might leave the "how to accomplish the task" to be decided by the person. Note that it is often a good idea to write this information down. You should always seek confirmation that these items are agreed to and understood.

Maintain open lines of communication. Do not hover over the person to monitor his/her performance. You should, however, sense what he/she is doing and provide support by periodically checking in.

Once the project or task is completed, carefully review it. Make sure all was done correctly and to your satisfaction. If you accept incomplete work or a lack of effort, you will be hurting yourself and the employee. They will not learn and you will always get the same results. Remember, you are ultimately responsible for the output.

Lastly, provide concise feedback and be sure to praise when praise is due. Feedback is an important learning tool for them and praise is due when the job is completed to the expectations you have set in your mind as well as those you have communicated. The easiest and most simple reward is a verbal acknowledgement and compliment. This effort on your part will go a long way toward building team member's self-confidence and efficiency, both of which will be improved on the next delegated task; hence, you both win.

Multitasking and Prioritization

Gale's Encyclopedia of Small Business defines multitasking as referring to the ability of an individual to perform more than one task or multiple tasks, at the same time. In the field of human resources, multitasking is a popular term that is often used to describe how busy managers or business practitioners are able to accomplish a growing amount of work in a limited time period.

There are also arguments out there that say there is no true thing as multitasking. That we don't do lots of things simultaneously. Instead, we switch our attention from task to task extremely quickly. This may be theoretically true, but for our purposes, let's look at the definition and understand that we can realistically do "several tasks at the same time", particularly when using technology or delegation, Even when we have our hands in several different things at once, we may still be either using an abbreviated time-frame to complete them or are juggling in such a fashion as to meet several deadlines relatively concurrently.

Unless you're managing just one or two people, it's inevitable that you will be involved with many issues and tasks all at once. Some need immediate attention, while others are less important. Multitasking is about knowing how to juggle several issues or tasks at once. Prioritizing is about knowing which of the issues or tasks are the most important and need to get done first. You need to be able to combine multitasking and prioritizing. Just be careful not

to overdo it to the point you start to lose efficiency. This is the area where most proponents of multitasking spend most of their time.

Here are a few ways to help you with everyday multitasking:

1. First and foremost: protect your core work. It is crucial to effective multitasking. Carve out serious, concentrated time for your high-energy, meaningful tasks.

2. Reduce or eliminate redundancy by improving workflow, processes and utilizing tools that are in place to reduce the time spent on each task. It is worth the investment to develop automated tools, especially if most of the tasks are regular and in common. This can include how you set up your e-mail such as utilizing task manager in Outlook (or other email program).

3. Separate the tasks into three groups:

    a. Those that needs to be done immediately
    b. Those that need to be completed in the next couple of days.
    c. Those that need to be completed in the next week or month

    The point here is to not only make a list of tasks, but to schedule based on importance rather than just having a "to do" list.

4. Delegate. Make sure tasked priorities are shared with your team. They will want to see the project succeed as long as they know the goal.

5. Keep on top of critical items. Postpone steps of current tasks if needed and switch your focus to critical tasks. Sometimes you need to make the right decisions like canceling a meeting in order to get the task completed in time. A good leader can adapt to changes and break routine in order to address the issues at hand.

6. Set a part of the day to focus on the "non-informational" tasks. This would mean turning off instant messaging, close your e-mail and only answer calls when absolutely necessary. A big part of multi-tasking is knowing what tasks you do not need to do right away, such as answering email (most of the time), checking instant messenger, etc. If you must

leave them on, only respond to matters that TRULY need your IMMEDIATE attention.

7. Use downtime to review new information. One of the dangers of multitasking is that it gets in the way of your memory. If you have to skim an important document during a busy workday, take time to review it later that day. Reread it while you walk between meetings or commute home and explain it back to yourself to make sure you understand it.

Next comes Prioritization - knowing which of the issues or tasks are the most important and need to get done first. You may have a to-do list full of all kinds of different tasks that are fighting for attention. It may include finalizing a project for one client, working on an estimate for another client, responding to emails, recording payments and working on financials, etc. With so many different things going on and a to-do list that likely includes tasks related to several different projects, knowing how to effectively prioritize can be a real challenge. Having productivity in your work day is important, but having productivity on the right tasks is what will really lead to a successful use of your time.

To that end, here are several tips that should help you prioritize you work:

1. Respect deadlines. Meeting deadlines is an arguably the most important requirement you have. Enough said, right?

2. Set milestones by making an effort to break down the work or product that is necessary into a few different steps or parts. Assign each part with a deadline to hit a certain milestone that will allow you to move on to the next step. Use these self-imposed deadlines to help with prioritizing.

3. There may be times when you have two or more equally urgent tasks that are competing for your attention. However, although they are equally urgent they may not require the same amount of time to complete. Consider those time requirements. Some like to prioritize tasks according to those that will take less time to complete so that can be crossed off their lists so they can focus more effectively on the remaining tasks. Others prefer to tackle the hardest task first, getting it out of the way, leaving the lighter, easier tasks as their "reward". This is similar to Brian Tracy's advice in his popular book Eat That Frog.

4. Setting monthly goals and then working backwards can be very helpful for determining what needs to go on your of prioritization/to-do list. This is made a little bit easier if you take a look at the big picture before setting your to-do list for a particular day. Try starting with monthly goals of what needs to be done. Then look at the specific actions or tasks that need to be done in order to reach this goal. For the first week of the month take the most urgent actions, those with deadlines and those that are foundational for other tasks, and put them onto a to-do list for the week. Then you can plan your week more effectively by splitting them up and setting certain things that need to get done each day.

5. Consider how the priorities on your to-do list will affect the lists of others. If someone is waiting for your month-end figures before he or she can complete his or her monthly report, then it might be prudent to give this one a top priority even if you've given it a month time limit.

6. Practice the time management techniques of the next chapter to help you prioritize.

In the next chapter, we will talk about time management.

Time Management

Part of being a successful manager is to know how to manage your time, as the demands on your time will increase. Time is a precious and costly commodity that many of us take for granted. Few people will readily admit that large parts of our working day are wasted through countless interruptions, procrastination, and clutter. Review these creative strategies for managing and organizing your time and implement those that resonate with you.

Create a time management system that suits your life and work-style. We all have preferences about how, when, and where to complete certain tasks and activities. By honoring those preferences, it will be much easier to accomplish more in less time.

Close the door for one hour each morning. Close the door, turn off the phone and place a sign on your door which reads: "Please return after 10:00". Use this hour as an uninterrupted time for concentrated work. Write this time on your calendar every day, and stick with it. If you feel a one-on-one meeting might go on for some time, state that you really want to continue the discussion and in order to give your full undivided attention, you would like to schedule another meeting to further discuss.

If you are in an open space or cubicle, rearrange your desk or chair to avoid easy eye contact: People are less likely to interrupt you when they cannot make eye contact. If you cannot rearrange your desk or chair, place plants on the periphery of your desk to create a physical boundary between you and the open environment.

Assign a dollar value to the total time wasted in one day. How much time do you spend per day: Locating papers? Looking for misplaced items? Duplicating efforts?   Being annoyed because you can't find things?   Dealing with interruptions that are unnecessary? Total this time, set a dollar amount per hour and estimate what your time is worth. Consciously cut wasted time in half.

Adopt a worst in, first out policy and/or better delegate undesirable tasks. Procrastination is one of the biggest enemies of a well-managed day. Often, we procrastinate because we do not like the task, do not have the right equipment or we do not have enough information to make a decision. Handle the worst

problems first, get them done and then move on to the fun stuff. If you continue to procrastinate, delegate the task.

Practice saying "No": More often than not, the act of saving time involves saying "no" to other people. Examples include: "I would love to attend, but unfortunately, I cannot make it," or "I am flattered that you asked me, but unfortunately I am too busy to do justice to the project at this time," or "No, thank-you," or "No." By saying "no" you are honoring your own goals.

Establish a time management remodeling day one day per month: Spend one day each month analyzing your time management system. Ask yourself what needs to be deleted, changed, modified, rearranged, enhanced, or minimized. Time managing a project can vary. Project management can be as simple as putting the tasks in order to prepare for a release of a new product or as complicated as the construction of a 20 story building. If for example you have a project to get your staff trained on a new product, you first need to:

- Determine what needs to be trained.

- Determine when the training should take place.

- Determine where the training should take place.

- Determine how long the training should last.

- Determine the amount of people who need to take the training.

- Determine how many people you can afford to take the training without losing production.

- Determine how many people can be trained without affecting the customer's immediate needs.

- Determine the cost of the training and materials.

A popular Time Management technique can be found in Stephen Covey's The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. We recommend reading not just this section of it, but the entire book.

This time-management technique involves dividing your tasks into a grid with four "quadrants". These are for tasks that are:

1. Urgent and Important (eg. "My big report is due in three hours")

2. Important but Not Urgent (eg. "I'm delivering a presentation next month")

3. Urgent but Not Important (eg. "My library books are due back today")

4. Not Important and Not Urgent (eg. "I'm watching YouTube clips")

What Goes Where?

Generally, it's not too hard to decide where a particular task or activity fits. The key is not to confuse a task's urgency with its importance. For example, it might be annoying to be fined $2 for your library books being overdue, but it's not really an important consequence in the grand scheme of things. On the other hand, missing the deadline with your big report might have huge negative consequences on your career.

"Urgent and Important"

This is perhaps the easiest to identify. The item has a pressing deadline or impending need and there are consequences if not completed on time.

"Important but Not Urgent"

Time management experts recommend you carefully consider items in this category. The tasks are important, though not necessarily urgent right now. Items in this quadrant will become urgent if you leave them for too long. For example:

- That presentation due in three months will be looking pretty urgent in two months and twenty nine days...

- Taking care of your health (eg. with exercise and good diet) might become urgent ten years down the line, when you get sick

- Sorting out your taxes will become urgent once the deadline's imminent

"Urgent but Not Important"

The library book example above is a great one. There is an urgency to return it by a certain date, but it has no meaningful consequence if you fail to meet this date at the expense of something in one of the above quadrants.

"Not Important and Not Urgent"

These are the tasks that don't necessarily need to be done, plain and simple. There are no real consequences and they are not really important. In effect, these are the tasks that you either don't do, or save for when there is nothing in the above three quadrants to do.

So why do we react to "urgent"? Most of us have a tendency to react, in almost a knee-jerk way, to things that are urgent. This is a good survival technique (after all, if a saber-tooth tiger is about to eat you, you'd want to leave off inventing the wheel and run away...) Often, though, it leads to a very ineffective way of working: we deal with things in a panic, procrastinate over anything that isn't urgent and end up creating a lot of stress for ourselves whilst not really accomplishing much. But you also need to draw your focus back to the stuff that matters. You have to make sure you're working on what's truly important before it becomes urgent, as well.

These techniques should help set you on the right path. Practice them, they may take some time to set up in the beginning, but after you become acquainted with them, you will find that you are categorizing and using your time much more effectively and that tasks are being completed in a much more efficient manner.

Solving Problems and Making Decisions

Problem solving and decision-making are key roles of a manager and leader. New managers often try to solve problems and make decisions by reacting to them before they fully understand all of the possible factors. They feel that the quickness of a decision is more important than the long-term outcome. There are times when a quick decision is needed, such as dealing with a violent act in the workplace. However, most decisions are not needed immediately and you do in fact have the time to make the right decision. That is the key, making the right decision. Just be careful to not let decisions accumulate or else you will have a backlog of both small and complex decisions to make. You need to find the perfect balance of knowing when to make quick and easy decisions on the fly and when to take time with the complex decisions. Problem solving and decision making are sometimes considered to be the hardest skills to master in the business.

While many people use the terms interchangeably, for our purposes we will define the two as follows:

- Problem solving is about going from where you are to where you want to be.

- Decision making is about choosing how you want to do it, so it is an integral part of the problem-solving process.

An example of a decision to be made that really isn't a problem; consider being asked whether you would rather have one million dollars or one million one dollar bills. You must choose between the two. I think you'd agree this isn't a problem, but rather is a decision to be made. We would also agree that some problems are larger than others, that these might take more work to solve.

That said, let's take a look at a simple process that provides a sense of order and a common frame of reference for those problems that don't need an on-the-spot solution.

Step 1 - Define the problem

This is often where people struggle. They react to what they think the problem is. Instead, seek to understand more about why you think there's a problem. Ask yourself:

1. What can you see that causes you (or others) to think there's a problem?

2. Where is it happening?

3. How is it happening?

4. When is it happening?

5. With whom is it happening? (HINT: Don't jump to "Who is causing the problem?" When we're stressed, blaming is often one of our first reactions. To be an effective manager, you need to address issues more than people.)

6. Why is it happening?

7. Try writing a quick sentence or two that answers these questions.

If the problem still seems overwhelming, break it down further. You may actually have two or more related problems. If you discover that you are looking at several related problems, then prioritize which ones you should address first.

Step 2 - Look at potential causes for the problem

1. Get input from those who noticed the problem and those who are affected by it.

2. Write down what your opinions and what you've heard from others.

3. Perhaps, seek advice from a peer or your supervisor in order to verify your impression of the problem.

4. Write down a description of the cause of the problem and in terms of what is happening, where, when, how, with whom and why.

Step 3 - Identify alternatives for approaches to resolve the problem

At this point, brainstorming with others for solutions is sometimes appropriate. If you take this route, do not pass any judgment on the ideas just yet; merely write them down as you hear them. Immediate rejection can destroy the brainstorming process.

Step 4 - Select an approach to resolve the problem

Consider:

1. Which approach is the most likely to solve the problem for the long term

2. Which approach is the most realistic to accomplish for now?

3. Do you have the resources?

4. Are they affordable?

5. Do you have enough time to implement the approach?

6. What is the extent of risk associated with each alternative?

Step 5 - Plan how to implement the best alternative (your action plan)

1. Carefully consider what the situation will look like when the problem is solved.

2. What steps should be taken to implement the best alternative to solving the problem?

3. What systems or processes should be changed in your organization? (For example, a new policy or procedure).

4. Don't resort to solutions where someone is "just going to try harder".

5. Determine how you will know if the steps are being followed?

6. What resources will you need in terms of people, money and facilities?

7. How much time will you need to implement the solution? Write a schedule that includes the start and stop times and when you expect to see certain indicators of success.

8. Who will primarily be responsible for ensuring implementation of the plan?

9. Write down the answers to the above questions and consider this as your action plan.

10. Communicate the plan to those who will be involved in implementing it and, at least, to your immediate supervisor.

Note that an important aspect of this step in the problem-solving process is continually observation and feedback.

Step 6 - Monitor implementation of the plan

1. Monitor the indicators of success:

2. Are you seeing what you would expect from the indicators?

3. Will the plan be done according to schedule?

   a) If the plan is not being followed as expected, then consider: Was the plan realistic?
   b) Are there sufficient resources to accomplish the plan on schedule?
   c) Should more priority be placed on various aspects of the plan?

4. Should the plan be changed?

5. Verify whether the problem has been resolved or not

Step 7 - Revise the plan as needed (even if it means scraping the old plan and starting over).

If the monitoring suggests that some changes could improve the plan, consider them. It might turn out that the plan didn't work in spite of all the efforts. Then admit it and start over. Each problem needs to be faced with at least some different thinking and be dealt with using different approaches and tools. Keeping open minds, drawing on many resources and using the outline described above will make problem solving and decision making easier, more efficient and perhaps even fun.

The Art of Communicating: Business Writing

Effective communication is essential to success in any profession, at every level. Whether you are meeting with a client, emailing an employee or phoning a vendor, you need to give great care to the quality of your communications. One must be able to clearly communicate all of the goals, plans and changes.

Communication may be the single most important skill of a manager. You can't be a leader if you can't communicate your vision. You can't motivate people if they can't understand what you want. If you think about it, all that has been taught up to this point relies on your ability to communicate in a way that they truly hear and understand just what it is your saying.

There are mainly two types of business communication, internal communications and external communications. Internal business communications play vital role in moving the work force towards its goals and a business' success depends on it. It defines expectations, informs, teaches, explains, is necessary for camaraderie, etc. The list is literally without end. The quality of relationships between the higher level authorities and the subordinates improve through effective communication strategies as well. In this Chapter, we will look at business writing as a form of communication.

The purpose of business writing is to share or request information. The information must be complete, concise, and accurate. The information needs to be written in a way the reader can easily understand and conveys professionalism.

Correct use of grammar and spelling is essential. The good news is you can use spell-checks to check your spelling, but when it comes to grammar, it's not always foolproof. Often time software grammar checkers provide you with a "best guess" of what you are trying to say. If you are uncomfortable with your use of grammar in written communications, you should find some books on grammar or take a basic course as soon as possible.

When your communication is informal, most likely through e-mail, write like you are talking to the person. When it is a formal subject, like an important process, then you need to keep it formal. Pretend you are describing how to do the tasks in a classroom environment and document as such. Try to imagine the person who will be following this process, and how it would best

read for them. Determine if it should be a step-by-step process or a flowchart process. Just remember, "less is more" in most circumstances.   Remember too, that if you are too wordy, people will lose interest and not fully comprehend what it is you are trying to say. You might need to write a couple of drafts until you get it just right.

You have to carefully judge the situation and the importance of each type of message you are communicating. Here are 5 points you should follow:

1. Determine the type of information you are trying to convey. Is it a simple FYI or difficult procedures you are trying to convey? Do you need to break the material down into steps? Will you need to organize and separate different kinds of materials for reference, support, or as a diving board for whatever you are communicating?

2. Think about what you want them to hear, then what you are going to say. Make sure you consider who will be reading this information and just what it will take to make sure they understand the point you are trying to get across. Make sure to use words you believe they will understand.

3. Who will be the recipients of the information? For example, is this a quick FYI to one of your employees that can be generalized or is it a memo to the president that needs to be spot on? You need to tailor the text based on who will be reading the information.

4. Create the message, process, procedure, or other form of written communication. When your thoughts are flowing quickly, write them out as fast as possible and do not worry about the spelling or grammar. You can come back to edit. When your thoughts are flowing, you will be able to get exactly what it is you want to say and in the best way for your audience to understand.   However, be aware of the length. Use enough words to make your meaning clear, but don't use unnecessary words to show off your writing skills. Business writing needs to be clear and concise.

5. ALWAYS proofread and edit before you send it out. Twice is better, yet. All it takes is one sloppy or poorly written document or e-mail for people to lose respect and not take you as seriously. Always re-read

what you wrote to make sure all the words in your head made it correctly onto the document. Be sure to check for:

- Spelling and grammatical errors.
- Look for omitted words.
- Reduce the use of long words.
- Avoid vague and ambiguous statements that the reader may not be able to understand or interpret.
- Avoid including unsubstantiated facts in a business letter or document as these may affect the credibility of the writer and the organization.
- Avoid "buzzwords".
- Make sure sentences do not run too long. Two 16-word sentences let readers grasp more than a single 32-word sentence.
- In an email, the subheading or subject line should say something of relative importance regarding the main point of the subject.
- Don't try to cram everything onto one page. A full page of crammed text overwhelms the eyes. It's ok to have plenty of white space. Besides, it also gives space for notes, etc.
- Try not to have long paragraphs.
- Three short paragraphs are easier to read than one long paragraph.
- When writing processes or procedures, try to keep the width of the page to around 40 characters. Readers tend to grasp information when reading narrower columns.
- Look for improper use of heterographics like to, too, two, and there, their, they're. Also your and you're.
- Avoid jargon. While sometimes jargon is unavoidable – in a business requirement document or technical specification, for example – try using plainer language. Even for people in the same field as you, jargon is often inefficient – the eye slides right past it without really catching the meaning.
- Pay special attention to names, titles, and genders.
- Be professional, not necessarily formal.
- Save templates.

- As a general rule, you should use few passive verbs in your writing. That said, passive constructions are quite appropriate in situations where the reader doesn't need to know who performed the action.
- Always include a call to action – something the reader is supposed to do – if appropriate.
- A cornerstone of effective writing is describing benefits, not features. Make sure to address why the reader should care.
- In longer, presentation style documents, tell them what you are going to tell them (intro), then tell them in detail (body), then sum it up by telling them what you told them (summary conclusion).

A few point on email in particular:

Every e-mail you send adds to, or detracts from your reputation. If your e-mail is scattered, disorganized, and filled with mistakes, the recipient will be inclined to think of you as a scattered, careless, and disorganized businessperson. Other people's opinions matter and in the professional world, their perception of you will be critical to your success.

- DO NOT CAPITALIZE ALL OF THE WORDS WHEN WRITING AN E-MAIL OR PROCESS, ETC. It is not easy to read and it looks like you are yelling out the words (unless that is the intention, which is considered rude when meant in a negative way). Only use all capitals in a title.
- Do not use emoticons, such as smiley faces.
- It is best to avoid background page colors, etc. in your email.
- Brevity is typically key.
- Use exclamation points sparingly.
- If your email references attachments, make sure they are attached. Always double check before hitting "send".
- We recommend sending confirmation emails when someone is sending you information. Feel free to put "No Reply Necessary" at the top of the e-mail when you don't anticipate a response.
- Don't come across like you are hostile in your writing. This especially holds true for sending or answering heated e-

mails. It is far too easy to do so in an email. Remember, your writing doesn't always necessarily reflect the tone of your voice clearly.

- Before you hit the send button when creating or replying to an aggravated type of e-mail, take at least a 5-minute break before hitting send. When you come back, re-read both the original e-mail and your response. Chances are you will re-write your response in a much more controlled and professional manner. You will get your point across more effectively if you keep it professional at all times.

- Respond to e-mails in a timely fashion, but as previously stated, be careful not to send a heated e-mail without taking the time to cool down a bit. The quicker you respond, the more professional you will look. Just like you like to get an immediate answer to your questions, so do your colleagues, employees, boss and most importantly, your customers.

- Create an e-mail signature that has your name, title, company name, address, phone number, e-mail address and website. This should be set up as the default on all created e-mails. Here is an example:

    John Smith
    Manager, Customer Support
    Sample Corp.
    123 Main Street
    City, State, Zip
    555-555-5555
    jsmith@samplecorpemail.example
    www.samplecorpwebsite.example

- When an e-mail is informal, ending the message with a simple "Thanks" with your name directly underneath is acceptable. If it is more of a formal message, you can use something like "Regards" or "Kind Regards" with your name directly underneath.

- When writing to your boss or upper management, always keep it professional. Address them with respect at all times, no matter how informal the organization functions. This does not mean that you can't add some humor when the time is right. The main point is to always show respect.

- Be careful with confidential information. Refrain from discussing confidential information in e-mails such as someone's tax information or the particulars of a highly-sensitive business deal. Should the e-mail get into the wrong person's hands, you could face serious – even legal – repercussions. Be careful of CCs and BCCs.
- Likewise, Do not hit "reply all" unless every member on the e-mail chain needs to know. You want to make sure that you are not sending everyone on a list your answer—whether they needed to know or not.
- Don't get mistaken for Spam. Avoid subject lines that are in all caps, all lower case, and those that include URLs and exclamation points – which tend to look like Spam to the recipient.

Business writing is an art. Pay attention to these tips as well as the way written communications throughout your business environment appear to you. Over time you will find your writing improving and your written communications becoming more effective and efficient. In the next chapter, we will continue our discussion of other forms of communication.

The Art of Communicating – Running Meetings and Giving Presentations

Effective business meetings are an exercise in communication: we speak, we listen, we discuss, we decide. Meeting rules may vary from one situation to another, but holding effective meetings is essential to getting things done.

Business presentations are sometimes part of a meeting, other times they are the entire purpose of a gathering. A business presentation should translate a concept to an audience that may not know much about the specific topic being discussed. The trick to a successful presentation is to find a way to make the topic accessible and interesting for everyone. Throughout your career, you are bound to be responsible for at least an occasional presentation, be it very quick and informal or extended and more structured.

This chapter will discuss Meeting and Presentation strategies and tips.

Holding a meeting

Part of being a manager is holding meetings. One thing that is for certain, you need to be prepared. The meetings can be anything from a quick follow up with a couple of employees, to a formal PowerPoint presentation to upper management. Meetings can be very productive, but they can also be a waste of time. You need to make the right decision when and when not to hold a meeting. You may find that you can accomplish the meeting goals with just an e-mail or quick conference call. That said, for a meeting to be productive, there are certain elements that should be present and one that is well prepared and managed can receive great success.

For starters, call only necessary meetings. Before you begin the whole process of calling and holding a business meeting, ask yourself if it is really necessary. Do certain people actually have to gather in the same room to accomplish your purpose, or could a series of phone calls, an e-mail or a memo serve the same purpose? Develop a reputation for calling meetings only when necessary, and people will be more willing to devote their time to them.

You should also be careful to invite the people who have something to contribute or who need to be involved in the discussion. If you have to consult someone for information or authorization about an agenda item and that

person is not there, it's frustrating for everyone. Consider inviting them just for a specific agenda item. On the other hand, although sometimes meetings are specifically for this purpose, be cognizant about not inviting people just because they are at a certain level in the organization. Busy people appreciate your consideration of their time.

Always create an effective agenda and distribute it well before the meeting. An effective agenda is much more than a list of topics. It can function as a meeting announcement as well as a tool to help the leader control the discussion. Sending it out in advance lets people know what will be discussed and gives them an opportunity to gather information they will need and prepare their input. Effective meetings begin with effective agendas.

Send out a meeting request a couple of weeks in advance of the meeting if possible. Sometimes, this will be unavoidable – just keep in mind that you want to give as much "heads-up" as you can. This is normally done through Outlook or whatever e-mail exchange server you are using. Think about who needs to attend and who might want to attend (you can cc those people). If some key players are not able to make the requested time, set up another time that works best for everyone. Send out any materials needed for the meeting AT LEAST two days prior to it, if at all possible (bring copies to the meeting as well). This also serves double duty as a reminder.

Your meeting request should state the purpose of the meeting, have an agenda and should set a timeframe that includes a finish-time, so participants can plan around it. Sometimes, the agenda items are listed with time frames as well (item a – 20 minutes, item b – etc.).

On the day you meet, be sure to start (and finish) the meeting on time. If you are waiting on participants, wait no longer than 5 minutes. They will get the point and be early for the next meeting. If you always wait for all participants, then there will always be delays. Aside from this, promptness will convey respect for the attendee's time.

Set up the ground rules. One of the biggest problems in meetings is the use of laptops to check e-mail, getting calls on cell phones, conflict between employees when discussing a certain topic, people who want to take over the meeting and people who just want to do the time and get out as soon as possible. Politely let everyone know that you will need their full-undivided

attention and that they should turn off all electronic gadgets. It is typically a good idea to solicit participation as well.

State an objective at the meeting's start that is results-oriented rather than discussion-based. For example; "We are meeting this morning to approve the final budget for next quarter." This is a measurable objective towards which you can work during the discussion. Be careful not to let people drag the discussion off track, either. *It is your job to pay attention to steering the content and flow of the meeting.* If you show strong leadership skills and use your time effectively, it will generate more enthusiasm and a feeling of accomplishment for all.

Be sure to follow the agenda and check off each item once discussed. This will show everyone that you are serious about each topic and that you are in full control. As input arises, it is also a good idea take notes. This not only ensures you cover all the important points but it also shows others how serious you are, which will give them confidence that their points are well taken. If possible, try to have someone in the group take notes for you, especially if you are in more of a presentation type of setting.

Strategic meeting management would also have it that you try to get the quiet people to talk more and any dominant monopolizes to talk less. The latter is usually done by politely interrupting and soliciting an opinion from someone else in the room. This can be especially tricky when the person trying to dominate the conversation is at the top of the totem pole! However, they know the deal – you will typically gain their admiration for being a strong meeting leader.

You will also find that sometimes certain attendees make a habit of zoning out or not paying the degree of attention they should. In these cases, you can often get them to listen without saying a word. Sometimes just the right look will get people to pay attention to you. Things like raising your eyebrows, giving them a steady stare, or even just stop talking in mid-sentence will help get their attention and focus back onto you. You may find that this happens when there are too many conversations going on at once.

Likewise, you may, at times, run into a situation where the group is starting to fidget, keep checking their watches or keep looking at someone in particular. This may be a sign that you have talked too much and need to give someone else some floor-time, or that a short break might be in order.

Lastly, end the meeting on time. Just prior to that, make sure all of the important items have been discussed, go over the action items and make sure no one leaves confused. Ask if anyone has any questions. If so, repeat the question asked so that the person feels good that you understood what was being said and that you shared it with everyone in case they did not hear it.

After an important meeting:

Send out an overview (or "Minutes") of the meeting. In a perfect world, this should be done within a few hours of the meeting to keep up the enthusiasm. People will address action items better and faster when it is still fresh in their memory. The minutes should record who attended, what was discussed, any agreements that were reached and any action items that were assigned

You will find that it is quite common to set up a follow-up meeting. If so, set up the next meeting for as soon as possible. This helps give true purpose to the original meeting. It is also why it is so important that everyone understood what the meeting was all about. There should be no confusion on that or on any actions they need to take.

On Presentations

For the most part, the same meeting management principles apply when setting up presentations. Giving a presentation, however, differs from moderating or leading a meeting in that when you have to actually, well, give a presentation. You are presenting more of yourself in addition to the subject at hand. You do not want to come across as a dull and unimaginable person. Even though you might know what you are talking about, the impression and perception you leave with a poor presentation can make others question your managerial capabilities. Too, effective speaking and presentation capabilities can lead to further promotion as these are not skills everyone possesses.

Following are some tips to help you obtain the goal of giving successful presentations:

Be thoroughly prepared and think about the flow of the presentation - but not word-for-word. You want to be fully prepared and confident on the key discussion points but you should not have a word-for-word speech memorized. If you rehearse your presentation too much, you will sound like a robot. You need to know what you are going to say, just make sure it flows naturally.

You will need to have a strong opening and closing. You want an eye-opener to grab their attention and a grand slam to leave them with a good impression. Make sure your introduction is consistent with what is going to be talked about and that you have prepared a conclusion to review what will have been discussed.

Create a list of key points and use the key points to transition from one point to the next. Be sure your points flow and connect logically.

Next, write your presentation. Try to give 10 to 20 percent to the opening, which should get your audience's attention and introduce the topic you're going to discuss. Try to entice your audience to listen. Some do this with a joke, others with an interesting fact or statistic. This author's opinion is that opening with a joke can be a gamble in many of the more formal situations. Give 65 to 75 percent of the presentation to the body of your presentation. This is where you introduce your main point, your supporting points and your evidence or statistics. Give 10 to 20 percent to your closing, which should summarize your points and make your main point one more time. Try to close with a remark that leaves your audience with a smile.

Now practice by visualizing yourself giving a great presentation. You will naturally be unique; there is only one you. Think about moments of possible applauding, your opening line, going through the slides or materials, questions that might be asked, how you will answer difficult questions, and your closing comments.
Perform a practice presentation, especially if using PowerPoint, by going through each topic or slide. Use your notes or laptop to recite the presentation. Look in the mirror or record yourself if you are unsure about your delivery. There are speech-training organizations such as "Toastmasters" that can help build your public speaking confidence. If you have time, it could be a good idea to look into something like this. After all, it can only help your career.

On the day of the presentation, check the room to be sure your display will work and be accessible to everyone in the audience before they assemble. Dress professionally. Bring a bottle of water with you to the presentation. Your throat may get dry, impairing your ability to talk.

When you begin, make a point to start on time. Don't wait for latecomers --- start on time without them. You should also avoid the temptation to bring latecomers up to date on what has taken place before they arrived, a practice that penalizes those who came on time.

Speak clearly and slowly so your audience can follow what you're saying. Gesture to the visual display when you're beginning to make a point displayed on it. Stand up tall and distribute your weight evenly between your feet.

Remember to eye contact with your audience throughout your presentation. Look at the audience as a whole. Don't just single out one or two people. Instead, try to make eye contact with numerous people throughout the room. A good tip is to find a couple of individuals on the right, center, and left that you can use as a target. Try to spot these people out before you start the presentation. They should also be located in the middle rows. This will help you keep from just looking at the people in the front row. While talking to them, swing your view from one person to the next casually and slowly. Don't feel like you have to always be looking around, just casually glance around the room. If you are giving a presentation to just a few people, then just be sure to give each person at least a couple of glances.

A few quick tips on using PowerPoint for your presentation:

1. Keep the slides simple and don't put too many words on them. The object is for your audience to see, not read, the material.

2. Use "Title" page with the presentation's name, Organization name, Company logo, and date. Make sure the slide is not crowded.

3. Prepare a bulleted Agenda Page

4. The slides in the presentation's body should contain only keywords or statements to discuss the main point. Your talking points on each slide

should not be displayed at the same time. Instead, they should be presented one at a time, in bullet point form, each time you hit the space bar. The audience will almost instantly read every slide as soon as it's displayed if you do not do this. If you have the next four points you plan to make up there, they'll be three steps ahead of you, waiting for you to catch up rather than listening with interest to the point you're making. Remember, the text on a slide is primarily there for you to expand on.

5. Graphs and charts are okay, just make sure they are as "stripped down" as possible (ie: you can't have too much going on. If it is too busy, you will lose the viewer). Labeling is very important.

6. For the most part, try to avoid the temptation to dress up your pages with the splashy effects available in the Program and focus instead on simple design basics.

7. Avoid clutter in your slides, make sure text is aligned. The alignment is usually left to right. Centered text is harder to read and is often seen as amateurish.

8. You should have dark text on a light background, not visa-versa and the font should be a simple sans serif font such as Ariel or Calibri.

9. Your presentation should end with a Summary slide, listing the main points just discussed.

10. You should also end with a "Questions" slide, providing the audience an opportunity to ask questions.

11. Always try to have a backup plan. In other words, a second copy of your presentation on a flash drive and if possible, access to a second laptop or projector in case something goes wrong

12. Lastly, have fun with it!

Conclusion

Congratulations on reaching this point! You have worked hard and shown your commitment to becoming an effective manager and leader. The information and knowledge you have just learned and obtained in this book will significantly help launch or enhance your managerial capabilities.

By utilizing the skills taught in this book, you should now have the assurance and confidence to lead your team to success, share your vision and goals, be secure in your leadership capabilities, improve, plan and structure your department for optimal success, manage your objectives, create and build a strong team, inspire teamwork, motivate and reward, deal with conflict, handle difficult and problematic employees, deal with violent situations, confidently be able to delegate, know how to multitask and prioritize efficiently, manage your time effectively, make the right decisions and solve difficult problems, communicate in written format professionally, hold effective meetings, give powerful presentations and more.

You are well prepared. You are also already steps above many other managers and leaders who haven't had the benefit of the tools you've been exposed to. So many times, it is only a matter of "induction by fire".

Remember to always inject confidence into your newly learned management and leadership skills. Be the leader that inspires people to want to follow you and share in your vision of success. Be the manager that plans, motivates and directs people to obtain the goals surrounding that vision. Do this and you will be known as a great manager and a strong leader.

Best of luck for your success now and in the future!

THE END