

A Manager's Perspective

The Privilege and Pleasure of Management

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Typically, in this column, I often write about the various technical processes of running a business or being an administrator. This month's column will be different. This column is about the personal benefits of being a manager – those things that make being a manager more than just a job – but rather a calling, a profession and the very basis of our professional fabric - Just like our calling to be a physical therapist.

Recently I have had the pleasure of spending quite a bit of time with some very experienced and very competent managers. What a wonderful and energizing bunch. I have been rejuvenated just being among them. Many of them are the same people that I have looked up to over the years as I have grown and developed my management skills and matured as a manager.

As I have spoken with my mentors, I have (as always) asked them a fairly wide variety of questions or engaged them in a series of philosophical discussions. This time the focus was on why they manage, what they feel are the most important rewards of being a manager and how they get through the tough times that besiege all managers at one time or another.

A recurring point that came through loud and clear in these discussions was the distinct privilege that they almost all felt as managers. The role we play as mentor, coach, counselor and confessor is one that they all take seriously and highly value. The role they play that puts together budgets, reports, and designs business systems is one that is often tolerated but frequently not truly enjoyed. Certainly, there are some managers who love the part of the job that I often refer to as administration, but most get their kicks out of managing people.

Managing people brings with it certain responsibilities but it also has great rewards. My manager mentors consider it a privilege to be able help their employees grow. This was the single biggest reason these managers stayed in their managerial role. The biggest kick was watching the staff grow and develop.

As a manager I, personally, have also found the most pride in watching the careers of the wonderful individuals who have reported to me over the years. Sometimes, I have also taken pride in watching the

careers of some of the individuals who weren't so wonderful.

Our employees are our legacy, our statement of who we are, what we stand for. Managers accomplish work through the efforts of others. What work they accomplish under our direction and how they accomplish that work matters. We, as managers, can influence what they accomplish and especially how they get it done.

Our position of influence should not be taken lightly. It is a wonderful privilege to be in that position. We are blessed with those who report to us. We can use that power wisely or we can abuse it. What a wonderful opportunity for us to make a difference in our facilities, in our communities and in our profession.

What is the message here? If the most enjoyable and rewarding part of the job is found in the mentoring and other advanced management activities, what can you do to more fully develop these skills?

One of the first things that every manager must do is to be sure that they have basic management skills honed to a fine edge. If we stumble over the more mundane, but absolutely necessary, parts of our jobs, such as staff scheduling, budgeting and variance analysis, accreditation compliance and staffing, we will not have the time or energy to move on to the more exciting higher-level activities such as mentoring and staff development. The key to the more basic skills is to develop adequate systems to make sure that they occur with consistent excellence and minimal effort. Many of them can be automated or at least systematized. Get the basics done as efficiently as possible so you can find the time to do the more enjoyable, more memorable parts of the job.

What are the basic management skills? Selecting, structuring, supporting, delegating, motivating, correcting and guiding. Doing these well makes you effective as a manager. However, it is the more advanced skills of mentoring, coaching, special project development and management and career development (just to name a few) that tend to bring the greatest personal reward. The tricky part is to develop systems so the basic skills are done efficiently and effectively while still allowing you time,

energy and resources to move to the more rewarding advanced activities.

I'd like to hear how you, as a manager, have handled the basic skills so you have time to pursue those advanced management tasks that seem to be the more personally rewarding ones. Please email or write to share your successes.

I want to hear your perspective and comments. My email address is below.

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