

Management and Performance Associates – April 2015

Am I doing what I should?

Moving from an individual contributor to a supervisory position is one of the most challenging possible career moves. This transition is particularly critical because it requires the individual to make significant adjustments to the definition of what his/her contributions are supposed to be.

Mastering the conceptual and theoretical fundamentals related to the function – translated in deliverables and results – is the most important contribution of the individual performer. One of the most classical assessment errors occurs when individuals continue to believe that the technical competence (the one which led to the promotion) is enough to guarantee success in the new managerial position.

Obviously, technical competence is important for at least two reasons: to direct and train team members and to be respected by them. However, although it's important, it's not enough. More than that, it could be a trap.

According to Peter Drucker, to manage is to obtain results through others; results that are consistent and sustainable over time. This is what organizations expect from managers. Therefore, if the manager does not develop the needed competencies to manage a team, and if he/she believes that the technical competencies will be enough, then what used to be an asset becomes a liability preventing further career advancement.

Not being able to make the necessary adjustments for this career path will not only have organizational impact, it will also have personal costs due to the inability to release employees' potential and transform it to results.

The following are some indicators that we might need further adjustments in our function:

1. Centralization

New managers may believe that nobody can do their technical jobs better than they do (and many times that is true). As a consequence, and to reduce risks, they get involved in the delivery. The following are a few of the possible consequences:

To the manager: imbalance between personal and professional life, loss of opportunity to develop new competences which are essential for success in current and future positions.

To the team: few learning and development opportunities, de-motivation and low commitment.

2. An environment of blaming and punishment

High technical excellence normally comes together with low tolerance for errors and "acceptable" delivery standards. That in turn creates an environment where errors are not seen as learning opportunities but triggers for punishment. When people believe they will be punished for experimenting, they will not assume the risks that are required in any innovation process. The consequences are a toxic environment, victimization, dependence on the manager, low productivity, and no innovation.

3. Insufficient and deficient communication

Effective people management requires allocating time to understand each staff member's difficulties, opportunities to improve, strengths and aspirations.

If the new managers spend all their time on operational activities, then they will not get all the information which is needed to set up a management strategy. Nor they will be able to identify the best approach to extract the best of each individual. In this scenario performance expectations aren't clear, "feedback" is limited to criticizing, coaching is non-existing and people cannot see the purpose of the activities they perform.

What should be done?

According to Ram Charam, Stephen Drotter and James Noel, authors of the “Leadership Pipeline,” everyone needs to reflect upon three critical questions, upon moving up a new managerial path:

- 1) Which competencies need to be acquired, and where should emphasis be reduced?
- 2) What are my beliefs and where should importance be placed?
- 3) How to allocate time?

These are suggestions to help us to answer those questions:

1. Which competencies need to be acquired, and where should emphasis be reduced?

Competencies to be acquired: Planning, delegation, coaching and feedback, motivation, networking, communication, conflict management, influence. Reduce emphasis on operating competencies in order to open space in the agenda to manage people.

2. What are my beliefs and where should importance be placed?

Importance should be given to people management, obtaining results through others, developing staff members, organizational processes, policies and controls. It is fundamental to understand and value that the manager’s success is measured by the success of the team.

Furthermore, it is critical to assign importance to managerial competences. If not, no time will be devoted to develop them or put them into action.

3. How to allocate time?

Be available to your team, to interact with people and other areas that are critical to your team’s success. Dedicate time to planning, monitoring, developing and training your team.

If you are a people manager, we have a question for you:

Are you doing what you should?

Small adjustments have the potential to bring important results, which will in turn, determine success. Think about it.

See you next month. Suggestions are welcome.

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