

“Being the Boss”
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Too often, managers get derailed, quite simply, because they misunderstand what leadership is about. Leadership is as much about interdependency (with subordinates, peers, superiors, customers, and other external stakeholders) and responsibility as it is about authority. It is no longer enough to have people who play on your team; you need the people who report to you to play as a team. Your organization is counting on you to stop playing it safe.

Leadership is about using yourself as an instrument to get things done. It can be learned, but only if you are willing and able to engage in serious self-development. I had strengths and weaknesses and a too-human tendency to overrate the strengths and recognize the weaknesses mostly after the fact. Becoming an effective manager is difficult because of the great gulf that separates the work of management from the work of individual performers. Becoming an effective manager requires that you not only acquire new skills and knowledge but also undergo difficult personal change.

Instead of confronting a performance problem, they fill out the compulsory annual appraisal form and simply negotiate the wording with the person involved; they stop thinking of what's possible and focus on what's expected. They hire people who are good enough and will blend in.

If you were a star, be aware that the very success that produced your promotion can now work against you. You cannot make progress without assessing yourself periodically and identifying both your strengths and where you need further development. Since it's a journey, you can become what you need to be. Good managers are made, not born. In all their interactions, managers rarely make definitive major decisions. They do spend much time trying to influence people, but mostly by asking, requesting, kidding, cajoling, nudging, persuading, and coercing—almost anything but issuing direct orders, which they rarely do. To be successful at it requires that you work through others—that you include and work with them, rather than simply issue directives they must follow.

Paradox: To focus on the work, you must focus on people doing the work. Managers are responsible for the work, but they get work done by influencing the people who do the work.

Paradox: You must both develop your people and evaluate them

Paradox: You must make your group a cohesive team without losing sight of the individuals on it.

Paradox: You must focus on today and tomorrow

Add to the Paradoxes a dynamic workplace and a changing workforce

Every team is a group, but not every group is a team. To deliver expected results may mean that you sometimes act as change agent both within and outside your group. As a manager, you cannot avoid decisions that affect the work and lives of others in profound ways.

Besides permanent full-time employees—once the vast majority—the proportion of part-time, job-sharing, freelance, and independent consultant/contractor “employees” is growing dramatically.

The old saying that “People go to work for a company but quit a boss” is probably more true today than ever. As a result, only good bosses, supported by well-run organizations, will be able to hold good people.

The effective manager's three imperatives:

- 1. Manage yourself**
- 2. Manage your network**
- 3. Manage your team**

Instead of the fly caught in the web, you must become the spider that creates the web—your own network—and dances lightly over it.

As you read through ‘Being the Boss,’ you'll discover a consistent theme: the critical role of self-assessment.

Manage yourself. Management begins with you—who you are as a person.

Each day people examine your every word and action to uncover your intentions and motives. They want to know whether they can trust you. Am I someone who can influence others to produce the results we need?

We conclude that formal authority is a useful but very limited means of influence. Trust is the foundation for all forms of influence other than coercion. Don't depend on your formal authority. “I'm the boss!” It's a common mistake to think management is defined by formal authority—the ability that comes with a title to impose your will on others. In fact, formal authority is a useful but limited tool.

Most managers soon discover, often to their dismay, that authority isn't very effective for influencing people and getting results. You may think people are perverse or stubborn, but there are many reasons they don't always follow your instructions.

- They disagree with you.
- They think something else is more important.
- They don't understand what you want.
- They find circumstances have changed,
- They dislike being bossed around.
- People may have a view of authority that differs from yours.

- Finally, people may not comply because they're confused.

Your formal authority by itself cannot generate commitment. When you rely primarily on your formal authority, you're fundamentally managing through fear—fear of the consequences of disobedience. Your formal authority cannot create genuine change. No one person can possibly possess the knowledge, experience, and wisdom needed to make every decision. Organizational success today requires the involvement of everyone at all levels. Less authority-driven organizations are more likely to elicit and take full advantage of the talent and experience of their people. Misconception: Do you think your authority defines you personally?

Organization charts, which literally place managers over those they manage, certainly encourage the “I'm above you” point of view. The frequent exercise of formal authority can lead you to inflate your own sense of self-worth and denigrate the value of those on whom you exercise it. The use of authority without respect for others or to satisfy personal needs rarely sits well with others.

Are you abdicating any of your management responsibilities? You cannot ignore your authority and never use it. It's not the use but the misuse of authority that creates problems. You hesitate to make any decisions without direction or, lacking that, full consensus of all involved. If so, you're abdicating your responsibility to ensure real direction yourself.

We've cautioned against too much reliance on formal authority, but failure to use it when necessary and appropriate is a management failure too. Do you want to influence others? Having an impact on others is the essence of management. The most effective managers are driven by a strong need to have an impact on others—not for their own satisfaction or self-aggrandizement but to achieve the goals of the group.

Effective managers use authority to do useful work, not to serve their own ends. Effective managers understand the benefits and pitfalls of authority. Another realized his direct reports were much more willing to cooperate if they were first allowed to offer ideas and reactions. Effective managers use their authority less to give directives than to set outer limits within which people are free to act. Think of authority as the way you create the arena within which your people can act with initiative and creativity. Calling meetings, can bring attention to an issue or problem and let people discover it for themselves. That's usually better than dictating a solution.

Should it be a close, personal relationship? To confuse being liked with being trusted or respected is a classic trap for all managers. If you're reluctant to discipline or terminate someone because of the harm it might do to your relationship, then your ties to that person will prevent you from doing your job as the boss.

Being a boss and being a friend are often incompatible. It must remain a relationship that never loses sight of one fact: It exists to accomplish work. Management is no different. It works best as a cordial, genuinely caring relationship, but it's not about the relationship. It should be an open, positive relationship, but one in which there is ultimately some distance, a line never crossed. It may help to remind yourself that friendship is not the goal.

In the last two chapters, we discovered that neither formal authority nor friendship is sufficient. You need other means of influence, all of which begin with trust. Be clear about what trust is and is not. It's not about being liked. It's not about being “nice.” In fact, it's based on two beliefs:

1. People's belief in your **competence** as a manager
2. People's belief in your **character** as a person

Competence: The First Element of Trust

We think of managerial competence as having three elements: technical competence, operational competence, and political competence.

1. Technical Competence (knowledge)
2. Operational Competence (the ability to get things done)
3. Political Competence (knowing the rules of the game within the organization)

Technical competence is about what you know. Operational competence is about knowing how to apply it. Political competence is knowing how to put your knowledge into practice effectively given the nature and culture of your organization.

Character: The Second Element of Trust

While competence is about knowing the right thing to do and how to get it done, character is about your intention to do the right thing. We define trust as people's belief that you will do the right thing. People believe you value the work. Would people say you think the work of the group matters? Would people say you work hard? Do people think you walk the talk? Would people say you worry more about your people and the work than you worry about yourself? The paradox here is that your personal success now requires that you find satisfaction in the success of those who work for you.

Character: People believe you value them as people. Do people believe you genuinely care about them? Would people say you consider their interests when making difficult decisions? Do people believe you strive to preserve every person's dignity and self-respect, no matter the circumstances? Would people say you try to see the world from their point of view? Do people believe you accept their personal differences without judgment? Do people consider you fair in the way you treat them? Do people think you listen well? Would people say you trust them enough to delegate? Delegation, the granting of some authority and decision-making power to direct reports, is both a fundamental act of management and a mark of genuine trust.

Character: People believe you're emotionally steady and dependable at Work. Would people say you handle your own feelings well at work? “Be like a duck—on the surface calm and serene and underneath paddle like hell.” Do people consider you discreet? Do people think you handle their mistakes constructively? Would people say you seek out what they think and are open to fair criticism? Would people say you're able to acknowledge your own errors, ignorance, or shortcomings? Would people say you're able and willing to recognize and deal with their emotions? Would people say you're able to step back and keep control of emotional situations?

Character: You possess a strong, resilient sense of yourself. A big ego seldom cares about anything but itself. Getting the right relationship with your people is the foundation of all else on your journey. Management begins with who you are and how people perceive you. Don't focus your relationships around either authority or friendship. Build them on trust in your competence and character.

Where Are You on Your Journey?

1. Manage Yourself

Do you use your formal authority effectively? Do you create caring, but not personal relationships, with your people? Do others, especially your own people, trust you as a manager? Do others believe in your technical, operational, and political competence? Do you exercise your authority and influence ethically?

2. Manage your network

Understand the reality of your organization. You need influence to make your team effective. An inability to understand and work effectively in organizations can derail both your journey and your career as a manager. What do you think about organizations and how they work? Do You Realize the political roles you already play? Your people expect you to challenge inappropriate or unrealistic directives from “upstairs” and protect them from excessive bureaucracy. A weak manager—one without influence—can only pass on others' demands.

You cannot manage without actively engaging the organization. Most organizations are political environments where decisions are made, and conflicts resolved through influence. Yes, power can corrupt, as Lord Acton said, but powerlessness corrupts too. If you want to be a force for ethical judgment and fairness when important decisions are made, you need influence. The simple fact is this: you must influence others—people and groups over whom you have no formal control—to get what your group needs and to work for what's best and right.

Start by understanding how organizations work. Conflict is a characteristic feature of every organization, the primary source of politics, and the reason you need influence.

Conflict arises unavoidably from three fundamental features of all organizations:

1. Diversity.
2. Interdependence.
3. Scarce resources.

Effective managers must be willing and able to engage in constructive conflict. Keep your efforts clearly focused on the good of the enterprise, and don't be surprised when well-meaning people disagree about how to achieve that good. Avoid the extremes of cynicism and naïveté. Don't make disagreements personal or let them become personal. Have a strong but not big ego. Stay engaged with those who disagree with you. Don't demonize others or let your group fall into the “us versus them” trap. Conduct yourself according to a set of standards important to you:

As a manager, you cannot make progress or succeed by holding yourself above the conflict and negotiations found in all organizations. Exercise influence by building a network of key relationships. Effective managers use their networks to pursue plans and goals in four key ways.

1. Do you use your network to obtain and provide information?
2. Do you use your network to link the work of your group and the rest of the organization?
3. Do you use your network to form coalitions of those who seek the same goals?
4. Do you use your network to exercise ethical judgment?

Build Three Networks

1. Operational network (short term goals)
2. Strategic network (long range vision)
3. Developmental network (growing yourself)

How to Build a Network

There are five major steps in building a productive organizational network:

1. Know your business and organization
2. Know where your group is going
3. Map your web
4. Create your network
5. Sustain your network

Step 1: Know your business and organization. Organizational conflict usually reflects competing legitimate interests. Understand your business. Understand how your organization actually works. Figure out who has influence in your organization. Who has formal authority? Who is listened to and why? Whose work is important to organizational objectives? Who's "plugged in?" Who has critical expertise?

Step 2: Know your current work and where you're going

Step 3: Think about your network. Who Should Be in Your Networks? Don't focus just on people you see and work with daily. Seek diversity over sheer size. Include adversaries or competitors. Don't forget outside dependencies. Assess those on your list

Step 4: Create your network. Make contact with network members. Use current members to extend your network. It's the nature of networking that to get what you want you must give others what they need.

Step 5: Sustain Your Network. Share, don't hoard, information. Be a bridge yourself. Build coalitions Take opportunities to make a human connection. Periodically step back and assess your relationships. Use all interactions to maintain and strengthen your long-term relationships. Talk as candidly as possible about your relationship. Avoid unhealthy rivalry.

Forming and using networks takes time and effort. Do you build networking into your daily work? Do you use software tools that facilitate networking and collaboration? Have you found a networking style that works for you?

What does creating a network require of you? Do my colleagues trust me? Do people like to deal with me? Do your colleagues trust you? In the same way, trust is the foundation of influence in a network. Trust means that others believe they can count on you to do the right thing, and it's based on two components: your competence and your character.

Competence. Technical, operational, and political know-how; It's their belief that you know both what to do and how to get it done.

Character. Your intentions—your values and standards—are as important as your capabilities. You need to demonstrate a dependable internal compass that leads you consistently to deal with people honestly and respectfully. Do your colleagues like to interact with you? Are colleagues confident that dealings with you will be consistently constructive? Their competence doesn't compensate for these faults, for research shows that such “competent jerks” can find themselves marginalized because others avoid working with them.

How you interact matters. Research shows that if people have a choice, they will elect not to work with a difficult person, even when the person is competent. Guess how much influence difficult people have on others?

Don't forget your boss

Make the most of this critical relationship. Why is it often an uneasy relationship? Do you see your boss as coach and developer or as evaluator and judge? What should your relationship with your boss be? With that in mind, use the following questions to assess and improve your relationship.

Are you meeting expectations; results, information, support and loyalty. Does Your Boss Trust You? Do you both see the current situation the same way? Do you agree about where you and your group are going? Do you negotiate expectations when you're given an assignment? Do you see and understand your boss as a person? Do you understand your boss as a manager? Can You Identify your boss's strengths?

Are you clear about what he/she need sand expects? Have you discussed with your boss your own growth, development, and aspirations? Have reasonable expectations. Take responsibility for your own development. Do you and your boss come from different culture, where your assumptions and expectations differ. Be prepared to talk about this explicitly. Have you figured out how to work with multiple bosses? If possible, try to align their expectations of you so that you're not constantly faced with conflicting direction. You must take responsibility for creating the conditions for your own success, and you're expected to do what is necessary for the good of the enterprise.

The following questions both summarize the key ideas in part II and help you assess where you stand now in regard to them and where you need to improve.

- Do you identify those who should be in your network?
- Do you proactively build and maintain your operational network?
- Do you proactively build and maintain your strategic network?
- Do you use your network to provide the protection and resources your team needs?
- Do you proactively use your network to accomplish your team's goals?

Manage your team

They may call their group a team and put up posters extolling teamwork, but they spend their time managing individuals and pay little attention to the collective performance of their people. A team is a group of people who do collective work and are mutually committed to a common team purpose and challenging goals related to that purpose. First, a common, worthwhile purpose, a sense of doing something important together; and second, specific and challenging team goals based on that purpose. Without purpose and goals you cannot create a team.

Through purpose, goals, and clarity, groups become teams—the ability to transform a group of people into a real team and to sustain the team in the face of potent forces that work to pull it apart can make you a more influential and effective manager.

The Four Elements of Building and Sustaining a Real Team:

1. Define the Future.
2. Be clear about how your team works.
3. Your team members are individuals too
4. Manage through your daily work.

Effective management requires more than personal interaction. It requires impersonal systems through which you influence others, including purpose, goals, roles, standard practices, values and expectations, feedback systems, and many more. To create and manage a team, you must learn to develop and use such systems. Teams are so important now that inability to build and lead an effective team is becoming a key derailer of high-potential managers.

Define the future

Manage for a world of change Do you and your group know where you're going? Have you defined and communicated the future you want and the steps that will take you there? Are you pursuing a clear purpose and related goals? Do you talk about such things? The pressures of today almost always trump the needs of tomorrow.

Why Must You Worry About the Future?

- You want it to be different.
- Your organization wants it to be different.
- Outside forces are changing the world around you no matter what you want.

What Are the Benefits of Defining the Future?

Defining the future fosters commitment within your team by imbuing its work with purpose. People relate to worthwhile purposes and goals. Most of us want to feel part of something larger and more important than ourselves. A survey revealed that less than half of all employees in every industry studied felt strongly connected to their company's purpose. Most organizations—whether a small group or a large company—are missing a great opportunity by not focusing more on why they do what they do and why they matter in the world.

Defining the future gives everyone on your team a common goal and direction. Defining the future keeps you, your team, and your network focused on what's important. Being “managerial” or “strategic” doesn't mean staying above everything. It means staying in close touch with the right things, the strategies and initiatives that truly matter, without doing the work yourself or micromanaging those who do.

Defining the future is a source of trust and influence. People and groups who know where they're going have more influence than other groups, especially when their plans are in sync with the larger organization. Defining the future will reduce conflict. Defining the future is the basis for your strategic network. Defining the future will help you center your relationships with your people around the work.

A manager with a plan is far more likely to be trusted than one who stumbles from crisis to crisis. Defining the future will help you deal with unforeseen change. “Plans are nothing. Planning is everything.” ~ Dwight Eisenhower. Few plans survive contact with reality completely intact. Defining the future is crucial to the success of virtual teams

Written and Unwritten Plans

Your written plan will cover the near future—say, one year—and may even look out a few years. Your unwritten plan, however, anticipates what is coming over the distant horizon, where things are still out of focus. Your unwritten plan tends much more to include gut feel, fuzzy goals, general direction, and broad priorities.

Your unwritten plan exists at two levels

First, it's unwritten and unspoken. The second level of your unwritten plan is still unwritten but now it's spoken.

The best plans emerge through a rich exchange of ideas and input from a diversity of sources.

The Three Key Elements of a Written Plan

1. Be clear about where you are now.
2. Define where you want to be in the future.
3. Identify how you will get from the present to that future.

1. Be Clear About Where You Are Now. What do you do? For whom do you do it? Why do you do it—what fundamental purpose do you serve? How do you do what you do? What key problems do you face?

2. Define Where You Want to Be in the Future. What forces will shape the future? What will you do in that new world? Why and for whom will you do what you do? How will you do it? How will your future work fit into the larger organization? What key problems will you face? What key opportunities are likely to appear? Here are some further questions that embody suggestions for thinking about the future. Do You Involve Others in Planning? Do You Use Technology to Help with the Planning Process? Do You Stay Open to New Information and the Possibility of Change? Are You Aware of Cultural Differences That Can Affect Planning? Do You Focus on Opportunities and Strengths More Than Problems and Weaknesses? Success almost invariably comes from finding the few opportunities that are truly important and then using strengths to take advantage of them.

3. Identify How You Will Get from the Present to the Future. Too much chaos is a bad thing, but so is rigidity that ignores a changing world. Given how you identified the future you want, how would you summarize the key ways your future work will differ from your current work? What are the key strategies, the critical activities, that will produce the change you want? Great success seldom comes from doing twenty things right. More often, it's the result of focusing on the right one, two, or three big things. For each strategy, what are the key action steps and milestones? What is the role each member of your team will play? What new competencies will you need, and where will you get them?

Getting to the Future—Guiding your group through difficult change

Here is where you must understand the dynamics of change and how to help a group move from a status quo that's no longer tenable to a different future.

The Dynamics of Change Three components:

1. Develop a change process
2. Create dissatisfaction with the ways things currently are
3. Identify a better way

Do you know how to foster dissatisfaction? You can also foster dissatisfaction through instilling a culture of continuous improvement.

Do you know how to identify a better way? Obviously, you cannot define a future world in great detail, but you need a collective vision that not only is attractive and provides useful guidance but also leaves room for new ideas and learning and can accommodate a changing world. Only through creative and constructive disagreement can good ideas surface and be thoroughly examined. So foster the expression of ideas and full discussion, however difficult.

Do you pay enough attention to the change process?

Focus on communication, communication, communication.

Keep people informed of both the process and any progress. Silence is quickly interpreted, right or wrong, as lack of concern, incompetence, and even malevolence. Involve others. To manage, be an agent of change. Nothing you do as a manager will be more important than developing and pursuing a view of the future that you and your group want to create.

Be clear about how your team works

Foster the right team culture. Without the right culture, team members are unlikely to take responsibility for their work or commit themselves to it and the purpose and goals around it. Culture is crucial to the trust that links team members because it defines what they expect of each other. The right culture can reduce conflict and keep it productive. It can lift from your shoulders the burden of trying to manage by telling people what to do.

The Importance of Clarity

As manager, you must ensure:

1. Clarity about individual roles
2. Clarity about how the team does its work
3. Clarity about how team members work together
4. Clarity about progress

It's a never-ending struggle to strike the right balance between order, stability, and predictability on one hand and flexibility and adaptation on the other. A team's purpose and goals, the future it's trying to create, are the foundation of culture and must be clear.

Team members need clarity about their roles

Each of your people needs to know:

What do I do? How does my work support the purpose and work of the team? How does my work relate to the work of others on the team?

Questions to determine whether a job is engaging

- Is there a clear link between the job and the team's overall purpose and goals?
- Does the work challenge the jobholder to use and grow his skills?
- Does the job allow the person to exercise some control over her work?

Team members need clarity about how the team does its work

Have you identified the information you and your team need? Do you hold regular meetings? Do you and your team make decisions in an open, systematic way? Are decision rights clear in Your Team? Are there guidelines or limits on what kinds of decisions people can make? Do you involve others when you make decisions?

Autonomous decisions are made by you alone, consultative decisions are made by you but after you consult team members and others. Joint decisions are made by you and team members together by arriving at consensus— Delegated decisions are made by a team member or the team as a whole without your involvement,

Does your team follow a reality-based decision-making process?

- Discuss and define the problem
- Explore the issue
- Generate possible solutions
- Make a decision,
- Implement the decision,
- Review/critique the outcome

Team members need clarity about how they work together as a team. How do members of your team work together? Are you doing what you can to foster the emergence of the right team culture? You can foster the values, norms, assumptions, and practices you want by: Suggesting or espousing those you believe will make the team more effective. Focusing attention and discussion on them (discussion is critical). Asking for agreement on them. Expecting team members to follow them. Enforcing them when they're ignored, abused, or forgotten.

Reminding team members to expect them of each other. Coaching the team as a group about how to apply them. Hiring, promoting, rewarding, and recognizing those who exemplify the values, beliefs, and norms you want. Modeling the standards, beliefs, and norms you want in all your actions and decisions.

Are there clear standards around the work that you consistently enforce? The team should expect results, not mere effort, and focus relentlessly on team purpose, plans, goals, and priorities. Nothing can destroy a team as quickly as a member who falls short of team standards while you condone his shortcomings. Are there clear norms about how team members treat each other? No one can contribute fully if she doesn't feel valuable or valued. Be sure the team hears and considers everyone's opinions. it's still your job to get all ideas and opinions on the table and fully considered.

Do you make sure the group allows, even encourages, constructive disagreement and conflict? Though often irritating, questioners can lead to real innovation. Do you talk about team culture explicitly and often? Do you coach your team?

Team Members Need Clarity About How They're Doing

Do you conduct frequent reviews of team and individual performance? Do you use performance metrics? growing evidence in all sectors of society supports the mantra that you only get what you measure. Do you encourage your team to evaluate itself and make self-corrections? Innovation rarely happens without risk taking and missteps. Develop a team habit of debriefing both successes and failures to identify lessons learned. Do you include yourself and your performance in your reviews? Are you careful to note and recognize good performance?

The challenges of managing virtual teams

Are you explicit about purpose, goals, and team culture; being clear about what the team does, its purpose and goals, and team culture, how members work with each other? Do you understand How virtual team members come to trust each other? They trust members who are reliable, consistent, and responsive, who meet deadlines, answer quickly, and do what they say they'll do—in short, who perform predictably. Do you, if possible, bring the team together physically, at least in the beginning for a launch meeting?

Are you careful to foster interaction among all virtual team members? Never assume that silence means agreement. Don't hesitate to give members feedback about their performance. When hiring or selecting team members, do you look for interpersonal team skills? Are you dealing with differences among team members in global work groups? Are you aware of specific cultural differences? In Spite of general cultural Ddfferences, are You careful to understand and deal with the individuals involved?

Are you aware of your own cultural predispositions? Do you avoid the subtle trap of thinking that cultural differences are good or bad, right or wrong? Do you talk explicitly in your team about cultural predispositions and all aspects of group process? You must protect your team from the weaknesses inherent in all teams

Is your team insular? Does your team discourage dissent and disagreement? It's a paradox of teams that you must foster both mutual support and constructive confrontation among members. Has your team fallen prey to groupthink? As you hire new team members, seek people who share your group's values but also bring different perspectives. Has your team split into subgroups?

Remember that your team members are also individuals

Manage both teams and people. How well do you interact with your people? Do you have lots of varied dealings with your people? Good managers spend most of their time interacting with their direct reports and others. A significant portion of people's trust will be based on their day-to-day interactions with you. Are you open and accessible? Would people say you're honest and forthright in all your dealings?

Would people say they know where you stand? In your contacts, do you fully engage the other person? Do you pay attention to all your people? What about distant team members? What about older, more experienced team members? What about your steady but not star team members?

What about individuals you don't like or understand? What about people on your team who don't report to you directly? How well do you know your people? What is this person's generation, and what does that say about her approach to life and work? What are this person's career aspirations? What is this person's life stage, and what does that tell you about his needs and concerns? In what culture was this person raised? What are this person's outside interests?

What is this person's unique life history? What are this person's strengths as a person and as a team member? Do you know your people well enough to empathize with them? Do you delegate? You'll never get the best from others or leverage yourself as a manager if you cannot let go of the notion that you must guide and oversee every step your people take.

Managers willing to learn eventually discover there are levels of delegation, depending on the subordinate's readiness, motivation, and the task at hand. Nothing will hold back your career more than a reputation as someone who cannot delegate or manage people's performance. Do you know how to develop people and improve their performance? It's not unusual for organizations to discover in exit interviews that people leave because they weren't growing or learning.

Do you know how each of your people needs to grow?

The gap between actual and needed competencies both now and in the future becomes the basis of that member's plan. Do you encourage team values that foster and expect personal growth? Do you coach people every day? Use every possible opportunity, day by day and incident by incident, to review, critique, praise, and coach. If you're not doing it every day, you're missing opportunities. Do you discourage upward delegation? At the end of every interaction, ask, "What happens next and who's responsible?" Do you help people evaluate themselves? Do you use the talent on your team to help people develop? Do you make clear your willingness to help?

Do you know how to conduct a performance appraisal? Always discuss a person's performance in the context of the team—its purpose, goals, strategies, and plans. Remember: the only purpose of an appraisal discussion is to improve future results. Always end the appraisal with next steps—an action plan for building strengths and overcoming serious weaknesses. Be prepared for disagreement. Don't withhold important negative feedback for fear of conflict or upsetting the person.

More than one manager has let someone's performance deteriorate to the point where she must be disciplined or fired. Such outcomes are grossly unfair if they come as a surprise, especially if an earlier discussion might have set the person straight. Do you know how to deal with poor performance?

Even if you were part of the problem, poor performers cannot stay on the team. "I didn't face up to people decisions fast enough. I usually knew someone wasn't going to make it well before I actually did anything about it. I wish I'd faced those issues quicker, resolved them, and gone on.

Everyone would have been better off.” Do you understand that disciplining and firing are multistep processes that need to be followed systematically? As soon as you realize an employee is a “poor performer,” let your boss know, and contact your firm's HR department for guidance.

Do you start by trying to understand the reasons for poor performance? It's not always the person. Consider modifying the job if appropriate. “job sculpting” is becoming more common—or moving the person to a position that makes better use of his skills and interests. Are you careful not to set people up for failure? Have you been clear and forthright about the work and what you expect? Do you let people know when they're in trouble, and Help them improve?

If someone's job is in jeopardy, and you've satisfied yourself the person is responsible, she has a right to know she's at risk, why, and what she can do to salvage her performance. A weak performer will drag down the whole group. When people must go, do you help them leave with dignity? Treating any employee without respect, even when asking her to leave, is shameful and unnecessary. Do you know how to select the right people for your team? Managing individuals begins with hiring them. Nothing you do will be more important than finding the right people. You can get everything else right and sabotage it all by hiring the wrong people. Until you've clarified your team's purpose, goals, ways of working, standards, and values, you can't identify the right people.

Here are some guidelines.

Do you start with a candidate's competence: What she knows, can do, and has done? Do you look for more than competence? Ask open-ended questions that aren't easy to answer briefly. Stories can be much more revealing of character than answers to specific, detailed questions. After asking open-ended questions, be silent and let the candidate answer fully. Go beyond references. Have others interview promising candidates. Is the candidate genuinely and personally interested in what your group does? The ideal candidate is someone for whom the work will be more than a job. Look for diversity. Pay special attention to a candidate's unique strengths. Above all, look for strengths that match the needs of the job. Make sure her weaknesses won't be fatal and can be balanced by you or colleagues. In sum: hire for strength, not to avoid weakness. Just make sure weaknesses won't be fatal.

Are you willing to hire people who are better than you or who compensate for your weaknesses? Do you have people who are better or smarter than you, or who provide some skills you're lacking? If not, why not? Manage through your daily work. Bring the 3 Imperatives into your everyday activities. How do you apply the 3 Imperatives—manage yourself, manage your network, manage your team—in such a chaotic, unpredictable landscape? Moment by moment, think about each daily task in the context of the 3 Imperatives and the purpose and goals you're pursuing. Waiting for spare time to appear is a fool's errand because it never will. And of course, they carefully review their activities and try to eliminate those they cannot use in some way to push their plans forward.

Prep. Before acting, take literally a minute to prepare. Ask yourself, What am I about to do? Why am I going to do it?

Do. Perform the action you prepared to take in the prep step.

Review. Afterward, reflect on what was done and the outcome, including any expected or unexpected consequences.

How good are you at asking questions that improve performance and help people learn? A good manager's questions aren't aimed at catching people in mistakes or belittling them. They serve two purposes simultaneously: to guide people to the right actions or conclusions and to help people see a challenge in new and more productive ways. Use Prep-Do-Review to Apply the 3 Imperatives in Your Daily Work

How can I use this to manage myself better? When unexpected things occur, ask, How can I use this to manage my network better? How can I use this to manage my team better? This imperative has several facets. How can we use an event or incident to improve and implement our plan? How can I use this to build and strengthen team culture? How can I use this to develop and work better with the people on my team? To think of work versus development is a misconception of how people actually grow and learn. The daily work should be where most learning and development occur. using the work itself to develop people by the way you design, assign, and follow it up.

Do You Use Prep-Do-Review as a management tool with your people?

Make a post-action review an automatic part of the updates people provide at staff meetings. Make it part of your one-on-one meetings. Model it when you describe something you did. What did we learn? What's the takeaway? If we were doing it again, what would we do differently?

Use Prep-Do-Review to delegate more effectively

Your goal should be to reach a high level of delegation (low control) with all your people for normal, ongoing work. As with so much in management, you need judgment and skill to stay connected and involved with critical work without taking over. Where are you on your journey? Imperative 3: manage your team. Do you define and constantly refine the future you and your team are trying to create? Do you clarify the roles, work rules, team culture, and feedback about performance that turn a group of people into a genuine team?

Do you know and manage your people as individuals as well as team members? Do you use daily activities, events, and problems to pursue the 3 imperatives?

Completing your journey

Learn from your experiences and relationships. Even if I end up disagreeing with you, I'll always be glad to hear from you. Do you know your strengths and where you need to improve?

Imperative 1: You're able to manage yourself. You use your formal authority effectively. You create human, caring, but not personal relationships with your people. Others, especially your own people, trust you as a manager. You exercise your authority and influence ethically. Do you know your fatal shortcomings? Are you aware of your management preferences?

Do you know which parts of management you like least? Have you set personal goals? Do you know how to make progress? Do you take advantage of company/formal training? Do you use your daily work to develop yourself? Prep. Do. Review. Do you seek feedback? Are you able to ask other people's opinions of you? How good are you at receiving personal feedback, especially if it's not positive? Have you created a developmental network? An operational network? A strategic network?

Imperative 2: You're able to manage your network. You systematically identify those inside and outside your organization who should be in your network

You proactively build and maintain your operational network. You proactively build and maintain your strategic network. You use your networks to provide the protection and resources your team needs. You proactively use your network to accomplish your team's goals Imperative 3: You're able to create and manage a team you define and constantly refine the future you and your team are trying to create. You clarify the roles, work rules, team culture, and feedback About performance that turn a group of people into a genuine team. You know and manage your people as individuals as well as team members. You use daily activities, events, and problems to pursue the 3 imperatives Pay particular attention to your strengths. Look at your strengths not by themselves but in the context of your organization's goals and strategies.

Do you include your peers? Do you Include your boss? Do you include those who work for you? Do you learn from role models? Can you endure the discomfort of learning? Do you have mentors or other advisers? Instead of seeking an ideal mentor, develop several relationships with those inside and outside the organization who can help you learn and develop yourself. Do you seek out new developmental experiences? Have you developed the emotional maturity to move forward? Thus, you will need not just self-awareness but self-control, personal discipline, determination, and resilience. The journey requires you to grow beyond your initial strengths and develop new capabilities to meet the demands of increasingly complex and difficult work.