

HOW TO ACHIEVE MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

COMBINING purpose, culture and people (with the right structure and implementation) will certainly initiate any organization's growth toward greatness. However, these three alone are not enough to sustain greatness.

When studying any organization known for long-lasting greatness, one of the most powerful elements of that greatness is a well-defined, practical, yet passionately executed leadership development process. Long-term corporate excellence is impossible without a dedicated commitment to developing tomorrow's leaders from today's great employees. There are many ways to build a great leadership development process, but the first step is to ground all managers, current and potential, in the six basic skills for management experience. Management guru Peter Drucker, considered the father of modern management thinking, has a very simple approach to management: managers do things right.

Management excellence is defined as



Leadership is in the center of most successful businesses.

the successful supervision over specific goals. There are four parts to this definition that need to be discussed. The first element of management excellence is the concept of being successful. Success can be defined as satisfactory outcome or result. Successful managers strive to achieve great results with full regard of those involved. Bad managers attempt to get results with little regard for those involved. Perhaps Jack Welch, the former chairman of GE, said it best while addressing a GE annual shareholders meeting by stating that, "We (GE) can no longer tolerate managers who try to force compliance rather than inspire excellence."

A key indicator of management excellence is whether a supervisor builds an encouraging and affirmative relationship with her team. Results obtained through intimidation, reprimands, or threats, whether good results or not, will never move an organization toward achieving sustainable excellence. Successful management is, therefore, far more positive than negative, and is far more encouraging than discouraging. Only through educating all managers on real success can an organization hope to achieve great results.

The second element of management excellence is supervision. Supervisors are

traditionally defined as those who manage the frontline worker, be they on an actual manufacturing line, customer service worker or office administration employee. Frontline supervisors are typically the first level of real management, individuals held accountable for the results of others who report to them. Most management education stops in middle management, seldom reaching the level of frontline supervisor. Yet these men and women are the very ones whose success ultimately determines the organizational results achieved.

The third element of management excellence is the "over." Unfortunately, without proper education and training, most supervisors tend to abuse their rightful position of power. This is especially true with younger supervisors or those relatively new to management regardless of chronological age. In both cases, these managers simply do not know any better. For the first time they have real power over others, and they quickly use it in non-productive ways. Even worse is when older, more experienced managers intentionally misuse their position of power over others, leveraging whatever authority they possess for more personal gain than company success. When allowed to continue, these backward-thinking supervisors run off top talent through their overseer, domineering approach.

Excellent managers understand that being over others is a privilege, a right to actually serve others rather than being served. With careful and attentive training, most managers can learn to build a positive relationship with those who directly report to them.

The fourth element of management excellence is specific goals. While leadership excellence is more concerned with positive influence toward the common good, management excellence is measured by how well a manager reaches his/her specific team goals.



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Where Greatness Lives

Frontline managers are the ultimate executioners—those closest to the execution of the company purpose. When given the right tools, training, and resources, they can achieve great results from their units and ultimately for the company. Two things are essential for management excellence. First, executives must understand how to align a great purpose supported by a great culture with a team of great people committed to the organization's success. I hope my articles can guide you in the process of alignment.

Second, mid and upper-level managers must be willing and able to take these essential skills to a new level, to go beyond applying the skills of a manager into living the roles of a leader.

Six Management Skills

Skill No. 1: Problem Solving

Problems need not rise to the top of the corporate chain when frontline leaders understand solid problem solving techniques. From recognizing real problems, finding the root causes of problems, to generating multiple solutions, managers need strong problem solving skills to achieve great results.

Skill No. 2: Planning and Organizing

How often are managers confused about their real priorities? How often do they waste time and energy on the wrong areas? Frontline managers need to be effective planners (setting priorities), and organizers (creating structure), to focus their time and resources more on what is important than what is urgent.

Skill No. 3: Communication

Communication is the ability to ensure mutual understanding. Without mutual understanding where employees understand what is expected and how to get there, great results are impossible. Every manager must develop the behavioral skills necessary to send effective communications (primarily speaking and writing), listen effectively, and give effective feedback, whether it is to an employee, customer or a leader.

Skill No. 4: Delegating

It takes every employee pulling his/her own weight for your company to achieve great results. Therefore, managers must effectively delegate tasks or risk burn out.

Skill No. 5: Training

Excellent managers understand the importance of growing the skills, knowledge and attitudes of their employees. They implement low-cost, high-payback methods to keep their employees up-to-date with the skills they need to achieve great results.

Skill No. 6: Motivating

Motivating employees today is far more demanding than in the past. Excellent managers know how to create a motivational environment and how to individualize rewards to the unique needs of their employees. ●