

Management
Management and Supervision
“Management, Not for the Unmotivated”
by Brenda Cook

Management is an individual’s ability to unite followers and motivate them to achieve organizational goals. This task is accomplished by communicating a vision of future accomplishments to followers, which they then work to achieve. To build trust and solid working relationships with employees and others in the organization, it is important to be seen as someone who is committed to sharing information with others. The manager’s responsibility goes beyond communicating only what is necessary; we are tasked with making the communicated goals a reality. A good manager has the knowledge and expertise to confidently lead a team toward organizational goals and objectives.

As an Information Systems (IS) professional, I have extensive experience managing large-scale projects while supervising people. The success of my career is built mostly on real-world experience, rather than academics; however, I have become an effective manager through opportunity and formal study. The experience has been useful when developing leadership skills, though formal study helped me to develop the needed analytical skills. These skills enabled me to examine situations more effectively and take the appropriate action. Throughout my career, I have successfully led teams by building credibility and demonstrating the appropriate expertise. I have also led groups by being given the formal authority to make decisions.

As a manager, I have attended extensive courses in leadership and personal development. Most people struggle with fitting their academic,

theoretical processes into real-world problems; while I have struggled through learning everything in the context of a real-world workplace. I cannot say which method of learning management and interpersonal skills is "better," but I have gained the knowledge and expertise to confidently lead a team toward organizational goals and objectives.

I have learned motivation is a set of attitudes that direct behavior. Motivation is finding the "what," "why," and "how" behind a person's actions and is the primary responsibility of the manager. Other individuals can influence and direct our actions, but motivation comes from within. Through my experience as a manager, a worker's enthusiasm has proven to increase productivity, minimize anxiety, and maximize skills and talent.

In this paper, I will present the principles and techniques I have progressively acquired in management and supervision. I will demonstrate my ability to effectively manage human resources through achieving organizational goals. I will show how I have leveraged my experience, formal study and my observation of other managers. I will discuss management and supervision from a "Corporate America" viewpoint as both a manager and individual contributor in order, by discipline question.

In a professional organizational setting, I strive to apply the basic principles of management and supervision including: planning, organizing, leading, and directing, in the same way I expect to be guided by my manager. The planning and organizing phase of basic supervision begins with employees feeling connected to the company. My responsibility as a manager is to clearly communicate the importance of each employee's role in the organization so they

know how their efforts will contribute to the success of the whole organization. For example, I was hired as a people manager for the User Account Services team by Adobe Systems Incorporated. My job included managing a team of User Account Services Representatives who monitor and maintain a variety of internal software applications. I directed a project team to build, deploy, and manage the company's security system, which would move them into a more secure and paperless environment. During the initiation phase of the project, I struggled with being a new employee at Adobe as well as being new to the project. I utilized my interpersonal skills and met with team members to investigate their area of expertise. Through many one-on-one interviews and several referrals, I gathered all the necessary information needed to identify the key players for the project. Once I was confident in my team member's roles, I held working group meetings to define the milestones within the project vision. By spending the time to understand the individual roles my team members would play on the project and their areas of expertise, I was able to match their skill set with the work to be performed. When employee's skills are properly matched with their tasks, I found they are more motivated to excel and achieve success.

A key component of the Planning phase of management is ensuring a proper match between the prospective employee's skills and the requirements of the organization. This match is the focus of the recruiting and interviewing phases. I have been successful in hiring employees who are a good fit to the organization and my team by making sure I use well-written job descriptions, which highlight the specific knowledge and skills needed for success. During the

interviewing process, I strive to reiterate my expectations to avoid any confusion regarding job responsibility when the employee starts his or her new job.

My responsibility as a manager is to also strive to balance the employee's needs with our organizational needs. I have learned through experience and watching other managers, that one common mistake we tend to make when recruiting an employee is attempting to push or "sell" an employee into accepting a position just because we need a "body." Another common mistake, is promoting a very successful individual contributor into a management position even though that person lacks corporate experience, thus setting up a very solid employee to be competent at only one aspect of their new job. On the other hand, a manager should not fill an upper level position with an employee who has seniority only.

When I first started in management, I quickly learned it is more than telling your team what to do. Through trial and error, I found this approach did not work well either for my team or myself. Management is about leading a team toward an organization's goals as a coach, mentor, visionary, and partner. Today, as an experienced manager, I do my best to help my employees learn their roles in the organization. I stress to my team how their performance affects each other, how their roles are interrelated, and how the success of the organization depends on superior performance from each team member.

During the early stages of one project I was managing for Adobe, I established an understanding of goals and objectives by creating a "statement of work." Although, I did not know all the answers, I was able to document the desired outcome based on interviews and meetings I conducted early on with

team members and key stakeholders. This document helped to establish a baseline and laid the foundation for a solid understanding of what was expected from the team. Another technique that works well for me, is leading my employees to find their roles in the organization by empowering them. I accomplish this by involving them in decision-making and planning, as well as giving them the necessary authority to fulfill the responsibilities I assign to them.

To continue with my Adobe project example, I empowered my team members to define their tasks, durations, and any resources needed. “Delegation has been recognized as a key ingredient of successful management and leadership. It is being prepared to trust people to do a task and achieve results.” (Crainer 119) By enabling the team to define their areas of the project, ownership of the tasks now belongs to them. I have achieved success as a manager by utilizing the “Empower” acronym, which has been instilled within me through several courses on people management and development.

Embrace my organization’s vision by learning what it means and how it applies to me, then I use the vision to inspire my employees.

Match my employees with jobs that require knowledge, skills, and abilities they possess. When my employees are matched with the right job, I have created the best opportunity for success, for both the employees and the organization.

Partner with my employees to align their goals with the organization’s – by making sure they feel valuable. When I communicate to my employees that I trust, respect, and appreciate them, I help create feelings of loyalty towards the organization, which will strengthen the partnership.

Observe my employees, which helps me to learn their strengths and weaknesses. I can then help them to grow by helping them work to turn their weaknesses into strengths and make their strengths even stronger.

Welcome my employees by helping to develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities through training, through performance improvement plans, and by encouraging them to assume roles with greater responsibilities.

Establish goals and objectives with my employees to help guide them in their efforts to perform for the organization. When employees have direction in their work they can strive for excellence in job performance. As a manager, I direct the activities of my employees by specifying the standards for their desired performance, their level of involvement, and the expected completion time.

Review the employees accomplishments because employees want to know they are performing to management's expectations. I give my employees feedback about the work they have completed, so they can gauge where they are being successful as well as where they can improve their performance. To show my appreciation as a manager, I try to help motivate my employees and boost morale, essentially "recharging their batteries", through half-day, off-site functions on a quarterly basis to the movies, amusement and fun parks.

The "EMPOWER" acronym works well as a guide to make sure managers are communicating effectively with employees, making sure that both sides are gaining the most benefit from the relationship.

Motivation plays a key role in achieving an organization's goals. Simply put, motivation provides the incentive to work as hard as we can to achieve success. "Increased motivation leads to enhanced productivity and output for the company and greater personal satisfaction for the employees." (Davis 182)

Overall, motivation creates a "win/win" situation for employees and employers. I have learned optimism is the fuel for motivation. Motivated employees believe that their hard work will lead to favorable outcomes, which reduces their uncertainty and anxiety levels. When I was working for a start-up company managing a team of desktop administrators, several end-users' computers crashed. My manager approached me, apologizing for the older, unreliable systems that were being used throughout the company. I responded by saying, "I am optimistic the shipment of new computers will arrive today to relieve the situation. My team knows how to get the computers set-up and deployed quickly. I am confident these will solve our problem." My manager expressed how appreciative he was of all my hard work.

As both a manager and individual contributor, I have learned motivation can be broken down in three elements: "what," "why," and "how." The "What" of motivation is the specific goal we want to achieve. The goal may be a material reward or a level of satisfaction, but wanting the goal directs our behavior and actions. The "Why" of motivation is the underlying reason we choose our course of action. The reasons may be conscious or unconscious, but we all have varying needs and fulfilling them gives us a sense of satisfaction with our accomplishments. The "How" of motivation is the planning we put into determining the actions we will take to make sure a goal is achieved. If our

actions are not advancing us toward our goal, we need change the actions until we feel that we are on a course that will lead to success.

Since motivation drives goal-directed behavior, a good manager should be able to recognize the different factors that cause low motivation such as low morale, lack of interest, or personal conflict with co-workers. For example, employees who do not have good feelings about the company or themselves tend to produce far less than they are capable. Employees, who are not interested in their job, will not be motivated to work hard and expand their opportunities. When employees do not feel they are being treated fairly, their resentment can build to the point where open conflicts can arise. Conducting weekly one-on-one status meetings and having an “open door” policy with the employees is a good way to encourage open communication. As managers, we must recognize our employees have lives outside of work just as we do. Sometimes employees’ family problems can spill over to work situations, which will have a negative impact on a worker’s motivation on the job. Without prying into the employees circumstances or making assumptions about the cause of the negative behavior, I try to acknowledge the existence of a problem and suggest the employee talk to a qualified third party to help resolve the issue. Today, many companies offer counseling benefits also known as, “Employee Assistance Programs,” at no cost to help maximize the employees health and effectiveness at home and work.

Unmotivated employees have an adverse effect on the organization. Unmotivated employees tend to have high absentee rates, which negatively affect the attitude of their co-workers and the manager. The motivation of

dependable employees is lessened when they frequently have to “pick up the slack” for an absent colleague. Disappointingly, unmotivated employees do not put forth the effort to maintain a consistent, high level of productivity. The impact of unmotivated employees can be felt in many ways both directly and indirectly, but always generating a spreading of unmotivated behavior.

As a manager, I take a few different actions and attitudes to increase motivation within my team. I trust an individual’s judgment when they are more experienced in an area than I am. I understand the person closest to the situation will often have a unique insight into the cause and effect of a problem, and they are probably the best person to determine how to resolve the problem. The result is an employee that respects my decision-making when I have trusted their judgment. I provide my employees with a straightforward, honest, and direct approach. I discipline behavior problems in private and I do not “make examples” of my employees when they make mistakes. I am as constructive as possible so the employee will be motivated to eliminate the reasons for the mistake. “Taking a stand, as a leader in the face of ambiguity or adversity involves risks and takes courage.” (Davis et al. 314)

As a manager, I always do my best to lead courageously by confronting problems directly and taking action on what I believe is right. I monitor performance, provide motivating and constructive feedback, and address performance issues promptly and consistently. I encourage the concept that I want my employees to work “with” me rather than “for” me. People want to work where they feel appreciated.

Decision-making situations are made easier when the manager understands the company vision and how it applies to his or her team. A vision is created by an organization to inspire its members to work together to reach an ideal of what the organization can become. The members of the organization should use the vision as the standard to determine the day-to-day functions of their individual roles. The vision is used as a guide for every action that is taken, a decision is made, or a plan is developed to improve the organization and their members. An organization's vision should enable the members in every role to know what is right for the betterment of the company. I have learned that as a team leader, conveying the company's vision through my actions, transferring knowledge through mentoring, and empowering team members to achieve results through coaching contributes to the success of a highly motivated team. As an effective manager, I direct my team members in fulfilling the vision of the organization, by being confident in the role I play for the company. Understanding my role as a manager enables me to help other team members performance and efficiency, as well as make educated decisions on behalf of my team.

Effective managers are respectful and appreciative of others in the organization. They are models of integrity and ethical behavior who trust and develop leadership skills in others. A manager should have the mindset to empower others, in order to enhance the performance of the organization and its employees.

Managers typically fulfill many roles within an organization; one role is that of a director. When in this role, managers guide the group in setting the goals and strategies for achieving the organization's vision. Managers are also

negotiators when solving problems. The role of a negotiator is necessary when managers must resolve conflict over such things as resources, priorities, personalities, or preferences. For example, two out of my five employees had slow, out-dated computers. They were to receive second-hand systems that might still not meet their needs, but instead I negotiated new computers for both of them. I did this by explaining to my boss that because of the slow computers, it was taking them twice as long to complete tasks. At first, he was hesitant, but shortly realized how much time was being needlessly wasted, and the price of a couple of new computers was quickly justified in his mind. I accomplished two things during my discussion with my boss: increased productivity within my team and demonstrated loyalty to my team by going to “bat” for them. Another role managers fulfill is that of a facilitator. Managers in the facilitator role, work to make it easier to accomplish a task or work through a situation. Based on my experience, managers often act a liaison or “shield” to ease communication between other members of the organization. In addition, managers are coaches because they help others reach higher performance levels. Managers, as coaches, demonstrate how to do a task, give feedback regarding their employees’ performance, and help empower other members of the organization. “As a new manager, I understood I had to give up control to get results -- I learned how to act as coach not as “the boss.” (Crainer 183) Managers are also advisors who must be effective in helping other members develop their own leadership skills and often mentor others in the organization.

Today, I consider myself a highly motivated, successful self-starter with great leadership, interpersonal, and management skills. I am able to

communicate organizational goals so they can be understood and accepted by all team members. I have learned that I am good at establishing group dynamics, which allow people to trust, support, and respect one another. I have learned that an effective team must have good interpersonal relationships among team members. "In order to provide structure and set expectations among the team it is vital to communicate through one-on-one meetings, weekly staff meetings, and promote ongoing dialogue between the team." (Two Sides to Effective Communication 25) It is important for me (as the manager) to clearly and frequently communicate the company direction to the best of my knowledge. I also believe it is important to communicate and provide feedback on issues in a timely manner. My responsibility as a manager is to lead by example, striving to model the core values of the company. I am passionate about my company's success as well as my own.

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