Teaching Managers How to Manage

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ABSTRACT

Following graduation from a college or university with a technical degree, or through years of experience, an individual's training and career development activities typically focus on enhancing technical problem-solving skills. However, as these technical professionals, herein referred to as "Techies", advance throughout their careers, they may be required to accept and adapt to the role of being a manager, and must undergo a transition to learn and rely on new problem-solving skills. However, unless a company has a specific manager-trainee class to address this subject and develop talent from within, an employee's management style is learned and developed "on the job". Both *positive* and *negative* styles are nurtured by those managers having similar qualities. Unfortunately, a negative style often contributes to the deterioration of employee morale and ultimate closing of a department or company. This paper provides the core elements of an effective management training program for "Teaching Managers How to Manage" derived from the Department of Energy's Integrated Safety Management System and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Voluntary Protection Program. Discussion topics and real-life examples concentrate on transitioning an employee from a "Techie" to a manager; common characteristics of being a manager; the history and academic study of management; competition, change and the business of waste management; what to do after taking over a department by applying Hylko's Star of Success; command media; the formal and informal organizational charts; chain of command; hiring and developing high-degree, autonomous employees through effective communication and delegation; periodic status checks; and determining if the program is working successfully. These common characteristics of a strong management/leadership culture and practical career tips discussed herein provide a solid foundation for any company or department that is serious about developing an effective management training program for its employees. In turn, any employee in any work environment can begin using this information immediately if they want to become a better manager.

INTRODUCTION

Following graduation from a college or university with a technical degree, or through years of experience, an individual's training and career development activities typically focus on enhancing technical problem-solving skills. These technical professionals, herein referred to as "Techies", typically provide a very specific technical specialty to a single department, may work independently from large groups by reporting to a single point of contact (e.g., a middle manager), and oversee a small segment of an overall, much larger individual project. However,

as these "Techies" advance throughout their careers, managerial duties, such as supervising other "Techies", are acquired through professional advancement or staffing changes within a company. Therefore, as "Techies" gain additional experience and years in their profession, they may be required to accept and adapt to the role of being a manager and must undergo a transition to learn and rely on new problem-solving skills. These skills primarily consist of communicating with a large number of employees comprised of varying demographics. However, unless a company has a specific manager-trainee class to address this subject and develop talent from within, an employee's management style is learned and developed "on the job". Both *positive* and *negative* styles are nurtured by those managers having similar qualities. Unfortunately, a negative style often contributes to the deterioration of employee morale and ultimate closing of a department or company. Furthermore, when formal management training does occur, too many managers are often trained to manage by numbers, thus making all decisions based on the numbers regardless of the collateral damage in the workplace.

Having worked for a variety of managers throughout his career and now supervising an Environmental, Safety and Health (ES&H) Department comprised of numerous disciplines and employees across three separate projects, the "field-trained" author presents first-hand experiences that can contribute to the successes and pitfalls serving as a department manager. This paper provides the core elements of an effective management training program for "Teaching Managers How to Manage" derived from professional enrichment program (PEP) classes taught by the author at the Annual Meetings of the Health Physics Society from 2003 through 2005, the Department of Energy's (DOE's) Integrated Safety Management System (ISMS) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) (1, 2, 3). Discussion topics and real-life examples concentrate on transitioning an employee from a "Techie" to a manager; common characteristics of being a manager; the history and academic study of management; competition, change and the business of waste management; what to do after taking over a department by applying Hylko's Star of Success; command media; the formal and informal organizational charts; chain of command; hiring and developing high-degree, autonomous employees through effective communication and delegation; periodic status checks; and determining if the program implemented by the manager is working successfully.

TRANSITIONING AN EMPLOYEE FROM A "TECHIE" TO MANAGER

Management is the process of working with and through others to achieve departmental and company objectives in a changing environment. This process is successful when a manager can: 1) communicate information to the employees, 2) motivate direct-report employees to perform their work in support of a department or company, and 3) make use of limited resources.

Webster's Dictionary provides the definition of a manager: (noun) 1. One who manages a business or enterprise. 2. One in charge of the business affairs of an entertainer. 3a. One in charge of the training and performance of an athlete or team. b. A student in charge of the equipment and records of a school or college team (4). However, the practical definition of a manager, in terms of action, is typically defined as a verb: 1. Responsible for supervising, guiding and influencing the direction of a department and its employees. 2. One who handles

crises without breaking a sweat. 3. One who works miracles without adequate resources. 4. One who bestows credit, but reaps all the blame.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF BEING A MANAGER

Table I summarizes the common characteristics of being a manager.

Table I. Common Characteristics of a Manager

• Managers work long hours. The number of hours worked tends to increase as one climbs the managerial ladder.
• Managers are busy. A typical day is made up of hundreds of brief incidents or episodes.
• Work is fragmented. Little time is devoted to any single activity. Interruptions and discontinuity are the rule.
• Activities are varied. The daily routine consists of paperwork, phone calls, scheduled and unscheduled meetings and inspections.
• Managers spend most of their time coordinating activities within their own organizations. However, as a manager's rank increases, more time is spent outside of their work areas and organizations.
• A manager's direction is primarily through verbal communication by personal contact or telephone.
• Managers use a lot of contacts. Consistent with their high level of verbal communication, managers continually exchange information with superiors, peers, and subordinates.
• Managers are not always reflective planners. The typical manager is too busy to find uninterrupted blocks of time for reflective planning.
• Managers spend most of their time obtaining, interpreting and giving information, which is the basic ingredient of the manager's work.
• Managerial duties are not defined by formal, narrow job descriptions (i.e., "Responsible for other duties as assigned"). Responsibility will always exceed authority and pure effort is not always rewarded.

Has this mode of disorganization resulted from the absence of managerial training programs?

THE HISTORY AND ACADEMIC STUDY OF MANAGEMENT

Although the study of management can be traced back to constructing the pyramids of Egypt, it is actually viewed as a product of the 20th century. Only three universities, Pennsylvania, Chicago and California, offered business management courses before 1900. Furthermore, the number of periodicals addressing the academic study of management has increased over time. In 1975, 64 periodicals were devoted to the academic study of management. This number increased to over 100 periodicals in 1985, and the number keeps growing even today. Table II summarizes the various specialty areas (i.e., concentrations) associated with the academic study of management that existed around 1961.

Table II. The Academic Study of Management (ca. 1961)

• The management theory jungle
• Empirical or case approach
• Interpersonal behavior approach
• Group behavior approach
• Cooperative social system approach
• Sociotechnical systems approach
• Decision theory approach
• Systems approach
• Mathematical or "management science" approach
• Contingency or situational approach
• Managerial roles approach
• Operational theory approach

In summary, these areas of study translate to observing, analyzing and improving the work process. Frederick W. Taylor (1856-1915), a former engineer at the Midvale Steel Works (ca. 1890), developed his emerging theory of Scientific Management defined as that kind of management which conducts a business or affairs by standards established by facts or truths gained through systematic observation, experiment or reasoning (Fig. 1) (5).

Fig. 1. Frederick W. Taylor (1856-1915)

Taylor's theory resulted in an increased use of time-motion studies to analyze the time required to complete certain manufacturing tasks (Fig. 2) (6, 7).

FORM I (front card): Card used in timing a machine job. FORM II (back card): When operations have been studied, this card is used to record the "one best" method

Fig. 2. Form used in an Early Time Study (ca. 1890)

For example, Taylor applied his theory to standardizing metal cutting operations. He collected extensive data on optimal cutting-tool speeds and the rates at which stock should be fed into the machines for each job. Resulting standards could then be posted for quick reference by the machine operators. Also, expensive cutting tools were catalogued and stored in a check-in/check-out tool room. Previously, the tools would be thrown aside after completing a job.

In another process improvement, the strongest employees were selected and instructed in proper lifting and carrying techniques to carry 42-kg (92-pound) blocks of iron up an 11-meter (36-foot) incline and drop them into an open railroad car. The amount loaded in the cars increased from 11.4 tonnes (12.5 tons) in a 10-hour day of constant effort to 43 tonnes (47 tons) in the same amount of time, yielding almost a four-fold increase. Only 43% of the time was spent hauling iron, while the other 57% of the time was spent either walking back empty handed or sitting down. The employees were less fatigued and took home 60% more pay.

COMPETITION, CHANGE AND THE BUSINESS OF WASTE MANAGEMENT

Competition is causing a sea of change for all organizations. Specifically in the field of waste management, organizations are tasked with processing voluminous amounts of waste in a timely and cost-effective manner. First and foremost, the processing of these wastes must be performed safely. Therefore, companies must somehow achieve balance between safety, operations and maintaining adequate staffing levels. In addition, the demand for certain waste management specialty areas (e.g., specific waste treatment or disposal options) are being addressed by smaller, start-up companies. These smaller companies typically have less overhead and can,

therefore, operate at a lower cost of operation compared to larger companies. Still, one common factor emerges independent of a company's size. Most organizations, supervisors and employees are taking on multiple functions, working longer hours, while having to work with smaller staffing levels, and are expected to meet all performance-based milestones.

Although this scenario suggests that resources and employees are being stretched too thin and that experienced employees are being lost to downsizing, retirement, attrition or "burnout", the fact is that if you lose good employees, your overall operations will suffer. Failure to provide adequate staffing levels combined with turnover and ongoing crisis management results in a significant loss of undocumented knowledge (8), indirectly creating ongoing corrective action issues (e.g., audit findings).

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, I AM IN CHARGE?

The Longford accident and other events (9) can provide insight as to the reasons behind the failure or success of a project. However, because of time constraints, a manager cannot very easily extract key attributes of success from the voluminous case-study literature. Therefore, Hylko's Star of Success, shown in Fig. 3, visually summarizes the common attributes that promote excellence in order to achieve project success.
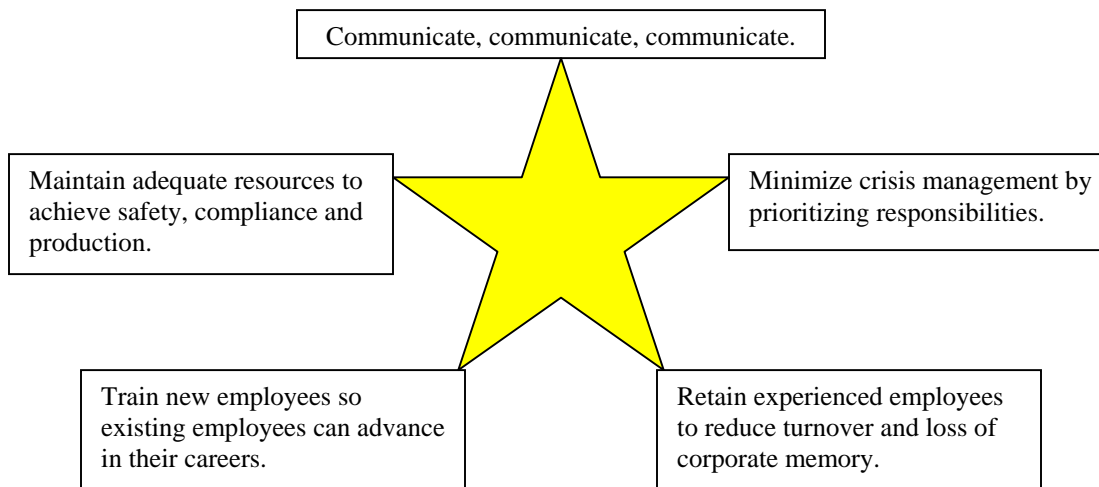

Fig. 3. Hylko's Star of Success

Nevertheless, even before a manager can begin promoting excellence, there are a few fundamental questions that must be asked that will help define the scope of work according to the contractual requirements summarized in Table III.

Table III. Fundamental Questions for any New Manager

- Am I working for a start-up company (i.e., building a department from scratch)?
- Am I being asked to maintain the status quo (i.e., don't rock the boat)?

- Am I just "harvesting" what is left of the department (i.e., time to close up shop)?

COMMAND MEDIA

Additional command media (i.e., sources of information), specific to the work location, help formulate a department's conduct of operations and are summarized in Table IV.

Table IV. Command Media

• Source term (e.g., radionuclides, chemicals, material safety data sheets)
• Facility authorization basis documents and standards (e.g., Safety Analysis Report (SAR)/Technical Specification Requirements (TSR))
• Nuclear criticality documents
• Corporate requirements, ES&H plan, Quality Assurance (QA) plan, Training plan, and standard operating procedures (SOPs)
• Activity Hazard Reviews (AHRs)/Activity Hazard Analyses (AHAs) (10)
• Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
• Lessons learned and other databases
• Environmental assessment results
• Resource Conservation and Recover Act (RCRA) permit and contingency plans

The command media coincides with company's duty of care, such that programmatic documents and safeguards are in place to perform activities according to the defined scope of work. Also, a reporting system is in place to provide timely and accurate information allowing management within any department to make knowledgeable informed decisions. Along with these program requirements, Potts, *et al.*, discuss elsewhere the common characteristics of a strong management/leadership culture (9).

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks for a new manager is to clearly define and categorize the contents of the command media, as shown in Table V.

Table V. Categories of Information

• Regulatory and contractual requirements (i.e., the golden rules)
• Best management practices (i.e., time- and resource-dependent)
• Urban legends (i.e., information and processes that have evolved into contractual/regulatory requirements through verbal agreements between project managers)

In order to stay focused on fulfilling the regulatory and contractual requirements in accordance with the defined scope of work, project management must be notified of any change orders and their interpretations associated with a revision to the scope of work.

THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

Based on the defined scope of work and command media, the manager must now organize the employee work force using an organizational chart to accomplish the department's mission. The organizational chart establishes a coordinated structure of authority, direct-line relationships and task responsibilities. By specifically identifying who does what and who reports to whom, the organizational structure translates strategy into an ongoing productive organization.

The format of an organizational chart (e.g., number of positions and employees assigned to a department) is based on the job descriptions and task analyses required to perform the defined scope of work. The format is expected to change using an iterative process depending on feedback, the maturity of the program (e.g., start-up vs. experienced company), collective employee experience within the department, and modifications to the defined scope of work. For example, a start-up company consisting of only 50 employees may assign the training department as a subset program within a much larger department, such as ES&H. However, a company that has been operating for a period of time and having a work force of over 200 employees, including subcontractors, may have its own training department complete with its own instructors. Some positions may be combined depending on employee experience, such as site safety and emergency planning.

Some managers may be involved with both administrative and hands-on field operations. In this particular situation, the individual job assignments within the department should be divided between *administrative* and *field* responsibilities. To clarify, *administrative* personnel are responsible for resolving all "science projects" and provide answers to questions from either third-party or oversight organizations. On the other hand, the probability of accidents and injuries are likely to occur during hands-on *field* operations. Therefore, *field* personnel need to remain focused on their own activities and not be distracted by issues that can be addressed by the *administrative* personnel. Table VI summarizes typical job titles within an ES&H department that can be classified as either an *administrative* assignment (Adm) or *field* (Field) assignment. *Administrative* personnel can sometimes serve as backups to *field* personnel depending on previous training and experience (Field Backup).

Table VI. ES&H Administrative and Field Assignments

• ES&H manager (Adm and Field Backup)
• Project ES&H representatives (Adm and Field Backup)
• Environmental compliance (Adm)
• Training (Adm)
• SSHOs (Field)
• Field ES&H technicians (Field)
• Equipment coordinator and purchasing (Adm and field backup)

This "line of demarcation" for assigning *administrative* **versus** *field* duties can create "tunnel vision" where employees tend to focus primarily on their own specialty areas. However, cross-training or backfilling both assignments periodically with the same employees who want to enhance their skills and gain additional experience will gradually result in these same employees being capable of performing both job assignments (i.e., performing both administrative **and** field duties). The employees willing to accept these new assignments typically become future managers.

However, if a manager is not careful about cross-training employees, two different organizational charts can emerge over time, one formal organizational chart (**bold lines**) and one informal organizational chart (standard and dotted lines), shown in Fig. 4.
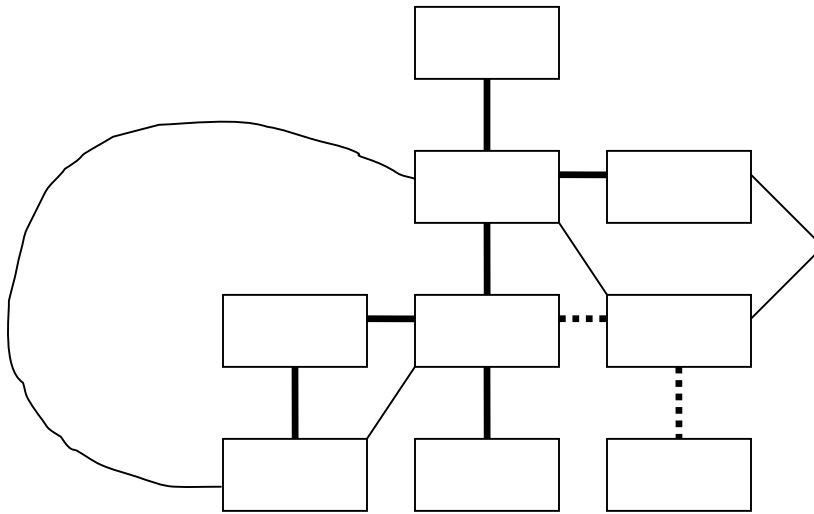

Fig. 4. The "formal" and "informal" organizational chart

The dotted lines (- - - - -) represent a chain of command that would occur under the formal organizational chart. However, these same lines of authority do not exist under the informal organizational chart, eventually resulting in a loss of control over a department or division. Although both charts can co-exist for the same department simultaneously, failing to identify a clear chain of command can generate confusion and possible delays when trying to complete a defined scope of work.

Ideally, the formal organizational chart should reflect the informal organizational chart. The purpose of either chart is to identify an employee's position relative to others (e.g., co-workers, supervisors) within the company, including who completes the employee's performance review. Also, the organizational chart allows the manager to delegate responsibility and authority within the department. This structure also helps clarify whether the manager's chain of command is based on an actual organizational chart, work instruction chart, or matrix.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

The organizational chart is used primarily to define the roles, responsibilities, and establish a chain-of-command within a department. However, the organizational chart can be used for identifying third-party departments (e.g., Waste Operations, Quality Assurance, Human Resources and Procurement) that are within the company and interact (i.e., form alliances) with the ES&H department both directly and indirectly. For example, although ES&H may "trigger" an issue, another department may be responsible for actually completing the task. Regarding housekeeping, for example, a cluttered work location will "trigger" a safety issue such as slips, trips and falls. Depending on the structure and collective bargaining agreements in place, the clean-up responsibility would fall under a foreman within the Waste Operations department to direct union operators to clean up the area. This also highlights how a manager from one department can have indirect influence over employees from another department within the same company. In the area of safety, for example, this indirect influence ensures that personnel from other departments are accountable for preventing accidents and injuries, and thus contribute to the overall safety performance of the company. Although managers and employees can be from different departments and co-mingle in the field to support a particular project, they all must follow their own respective chain of command.

HIRING AND DEVELOPING HIGH-DEGREE AUTONOMOUS EMPLOYEES

A typical day at the office for a manager will likely consist of the following activities, shown in Table VII.

Table VII. Routine Managerial Activities

• Daily walkarounds, submittals and recordkeeping to verify compliance with regulatory and contractual requirements
• Project status and scheduling meetings
• Resolving corrective actions
• AHR/AHA reviews and training
• Participating on ES&H, safety, and process improvement teams
• Preparation of monthly safety meetings

Since these activities cannot be accomplished by one individual person, a manager must hire departmental employees (i.e., direct reports) through an interview process. The hiring of these direct reports will help the manager achieve the department's goals and objectives in accordance with the defined scope of work.

Although the formal interview process is managed by a Human Resources department, the manager should still prepare questions in order to evaluate whether the interviewee has the background and experience to accomplish the job description requirements successfully. Even if a manager takes over a department that is already comprised of existing employees, the manager should still meet with these employees to describe the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the department, as well as assess employee competencies relevant to the mission of the department, as shown in Table VIII.

Table VIII. Manager Talking Points

• The department's purpose and impact on the overall organization
• Metrics and expectations
• Roles and responsibilities of each direct report
• Identifying procedures and resources for accomplishing the department's defined scope of work
• Identifying additional strengths based on education and experience of direct-report employees

Table IX provides a sampling of open-ended, response-type interview questions that can be modified according to the job description requirements in accordance with any additional experience, training and/or education.

Table IX. Sample Interview Questions

• Tell me about your current responsibilities.
• What have you accomplished (e.g., cost savings, improved program efficiency)?
• Are there any assignments that you particularly like or dislike?
• Tell me about a time when you had to resolve an issue at work.

The sample interview questions can be enhanced or modified to evaluate the following core values, summarized in Table X.

Table X. Core Values to be Evaluated During an Employee Interview

• Accountability - Taking responsibility for decisions at individual and company levels.
• Challenges and achievement – What diversity has the employee faced, and what has the employee achieved?
• Attitude – Good, bad or indifferent?
• Balance and commitment – Is this a well-rounded employee?
• Boldness – Has the employee ever taken a calculated risk to encourage professional growth?
• Community involvement – Is the employee willing to support company-community activities?

The obvious reason for conducting an interview is to hire technically competent employees that can identify issues according to the roles and responsibilities of the department, conduct research to support any findings, and then communicate these issues or findings clearly and concisely to the manager. In addition to considering feedback from the direct-report employee, the manager may also need to consider input from a company officer (e.g., the manager's supervisor) and ensure the result of a decision coincides with overall company goals and delegated authority.

Afterwards, the manager can then make a levelheaded decision based on valid information and documented feedback.

Table XI summarizes various subject areas regarding manager-employee communication, interaction, and feedback talking points. A separate handout of this information can be obtained from the author directly.

Table XI. Manager-Employee Talking Points

• Getting good information from others
• Developing job skills/planning questions
• Establishing performance expectations
• Building a constructive relationship with your manager and peers
• Recognizing positive results
• Resolving manager, peer and departmental conflicts
• Dealing with emotional behavior
• Providing constructive feedback
• Taking corrective action

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

A written statement of intention is just one of many ways to communicate with your direct reports. This written statement is supposed to provide information through quantitative, measurable, and concrete terms in order to achieve desired results within a given period of time. Table XII provides a handy, three-way test to evaluate the effectiveness of a written statement of intention.

Table XII. Three-Way Test to Evaluate the Effectiveness of a Written Statement of Intention

• Test 1: Does this objective tell me exactly what is the intended result?
• Test 2: Does this objective specify when the intended result is to be accomplished?
• Test 3: Can the intended result be measured or validated?

A statement of intention that fails one or more of these three tests will hinder rather than help the planning process. For example, readers can quiz themselves as to whether the following statements in Table XIII would either pass (P) or fail (F) these tests.

Table XIII. Statement of Intention Quiz

• P/F - To increase plant capacity factor to 95%.
• P/F - To ship 25% of our projected generated waste volume by the end of the next quarter.
• P/F - To reduce the number of backlogged corrective actions, at least by half, every month.
• P/F – Tomorrow, start completing the equipment inventory.

DELEGATION

There are managers that construct barriers or micromanage. This style prohibits the sharing of decision-making authority with direct-report employees. Even though a manager may have competent employees within the department that perform their roles and responsibilities in a professional manner, the manager may still believe that…

"If you want it done right, do it yourself."

Other contributing factors for micromanaging consist of a manager's lack of confidence to trust subordinates, fear of being called lazy, fear of competition from subordinates, a reluctance to take risks by depending on others, or a lack of control that may provide an early warning (i.e., leading indicator) of problems with delegated duties.

Nevertheless, you must delegate if you are to succeed as a manager! Delegation is the process of sharing decision-making authority with direct reports, not the abdication of responsibility that ultimately resides with the department manager. This is analogous to a professional sports team manager that is fired after a losing season, even though the star athlete may have experienced injuries to limit playing time or the team did not have the talent within the organization to win a majority of its games. The manager is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the department. In order to achieve success, the manager must rely on varying degrees of delegation. Table XIV identifies the varying degrees of delegation.

Table XIV. Degrees of Delegation

• **Low**: A low degree of delegation is applied to a new or very inexperienced direct-report employee that is just beginning to learn about the department. The direct-report employee investigates an issue, reports information back to the manager, but does not take any corrective action. The manager uses this information to identify decision alternatives and take action.
• **Moderate**: A moderate degree of delegation is applied to a direct-report employee that has experience within the department and is looking for additional responsibilities to learn more about the company. The direct-report employee investigates an issue, identifies decision alternatives, and even recommends a corrective action. The manager then approves or disapproves the recommended corrective action.
• **High**: A high degree of delegation is applied to a direct-report employee that has a vast amount of experience, both internal and external to the company. The direct-report employee investigates an issue, identifies decision alternatives, and initiates their own corrective action based on previous experience and departmental guidelines. Communication with the manager prior to implementing the corrective action is not always necessary. In addition, these employees are capable of serving as the interim manager (i.e., designee) when the manager is absent and are likely to be promoted into the role of a manager.

The ultimate goal for any manager is to achieve a moderate-to-high degree of delegation with all departmental employees.

Whether dealing with supportive or micromanaging supervisors, effective communication becomes even more significant for a department, as a whole, to succeed. Although this may appear to be a complicated issue, the solution is very simple. Direct-report employees are in the field or usually involved with some hands-on aspect of the operation. Therefore, a manager's message to direct-report employees, for example, would be…

> *"If you discover something that is outside of the defined scope of work,*
> *report it, so we can fix it."*

Other approaches consist of how an issue is identified and resolved, such as addressing issues systematically instead of a shot-gun, crisis approach. Since the manager should already have competent, professional and trained employees already in the organization, the manager should communicate specifically that everyone has the freedom to make decisions in the field without repercussions. Also, trust is a critical part of the manager-employee control system, since it cannot be removed from any productive, long-term human relationship. Nevertheless, hindsight is 20/20. Therefore, third-party or oversight organizations may have to be reminded that decisions are being made by direct-report employees based on information that is available to them at that time. Although failure is a part of everyday risk, an experienced manager should already be able to differentiate amongst personal failure, uncontrollable failure, incompetence, and negligence and have a clear idea of how to respond to these issues in a fair and professional manner.

As a result, the manager should already understand that third-party (i.e., outside of the department) personnel will develop pre-determined conclusions following any negative events. Finding a solution then becomes a resource drain to the manager and the department since an investigation, requiring an allocation of resources, is now required to resolve the issue. For example, a manager was required to investigate and provide a report at the next staff meeting as to why numerous employees were turning up with expired training. The external threat by third-party personnel was that the training coordinator was immediately at fault when the real issue was identifying "no-show" (i.e., absent) employees beforehand. Previously, the training coordinator would not learn of a "no show" employee until sometime later after receiving the class attendance list or sign-in sheet. In the meantime, an employee would show up for an assignment with expired training. As part of the corrective action, the employee's supervisor would notify the training coordinator that same day the employee was going to be absent. The missed training could be tracked and rescheduled to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

PERIODIC STATUS CHECKS

Based on the information contained in this paper, the manager has defined the scope of work; identified regulatory and contractual requirements; has issued appropriate command media to conduct work; issued an organizational chart; and defined roles and responsibilities of the employees within the department. Do you believe the manager is ready to go to work? Actually,

this is trick question, since the manager maintains oversight of the program, but turns the hands-on activities over to the direct-report employees based on delegated authority.

Depending on the maturity of the program, the manager is at the mercy of the "90/6 – 10/3 rule". A new manager will establish and implement 90% of the program in the first 6 months of tenure. However, it can take another 3 years to implement the remaining 10%.

IS THE PROGRAM WORKING?

How do we know the program is working? There are various quantitative and qualitative markers (i.e., lagging and leading indicators) to highlight how the department and company are functioning. Lagging indicators, for example, would consist of a downward trend of any accident or injury rates, documenting "zero" environmental releases and "zero" personal contamination incidents. Also, accumulating over 500,000 safe work hours through CY 2005 without a recordable accident or injury, for example, would validate that a safe work culture and questioning attitude by the employees exists throughout the entire company.

However, since this is a classic "lagging" indicator, is there a metric to adequately identify performance in a timely manner, such as a "leading" indicator? Table XV summarizes recommended quantitative and qualitative leading indicators that can be used to highlight the means to create a better future for the department or company.

Table XV: Recommended Quantitative and Qualitative Leading Indicators

- How long do corrective actions stay open (e.g., days, weeks, months…)?
- What prompts overtime (e.g., planning, workload, staffing)?
- Employee participation in the following programs:
    - Activity Hazard Reviews (AHRs)/Activity Hazard Analyses (AHAs)
    - Pre-job and post-job briefings
    - ISMS closeout meetings

Managers should understand that tracking and trending data cannot always predict the future. Developing a standard set of quantitative and qualitative leading indicators is still under study (11). Still, no matter what type of tracking or trending program is in use, if the manager is doing things correctly, the "numbers" will take care of themselves.

CONCLUSION

Since 1988, leadership has consistently been one of the top five issues in the Human Resources Institute's (HRI's) survey of "major issues". Since 1997, leadership has always taken the top spot. In the most recent survey, 76% of North American respondents said it was extremely important; the highest percentage in the history of these surveys. When asked to predict the importance of various issues ten years into the future, North Americans and Europeans again rated leadership first and third, respectively. However, leaders ([sic] in the form of managers) do not spring into the world fully formed. They need to be trained and developed, whatever their

natural talents (12). Although opportunities for advancement into leadership positions (e.g., management) may exist, there is often a lack of formal training available to make this transition complete. Employees must then learn these managerial skills either through current or past supervisors, or even on the job. Because of the absence of any formal managerial training, employees who eventually become managers can very easily develop poor habits that can contribute to the demise of a department or company.

It is an accepted fact that in any work environment, the foundation for success and advancement throughout an employee's career is good performance. However, the screening of candidates for future managerial positions should consider a variety of factors, such as whether the employee is already involved with decision-making events and exhibits a high-degree of delegation autonomy. Also, the candidate should provide complementary, crucial skills that are sometimes unique when compared to the current managerial team. Furthermore, the candidate must have the capability and understanding to obtain resources and support either from within or from outside the department or company. Therefore, if a "Techie" is looking for advancement to eventually become a manager, they can no longer view their responsibilities myopically. They must grow professionally, primarily through communication, in order to supervise, guide and influence the direction of a department, and its employees, as well as other third-party organizations.

Nevertheless, looking either up or down the corporate ladder, an employee's career and upward mobility within the department or company will be determined by 1) communication skills and 2) the competency of the employee's immediate supervisor. Weaknesses in either one or both of these areas can and will eventually overshadow technical skills. Moreover, an aspiring manager must be comfortable being dependent on others (i.e., delegating) and, in turn, having direct-report employees dependent on them for support. From this, it can be concluded that leadership is a synergistic result that ultimately comes from loyalty, commitment and communicating with direct-report employees. These common characteristics of a strong management/leadership culture and practical career tips discussed herein provide a solid foundation for any company or department that is serious about developing an effective management training program for its employees. In turn, any employee in any work environment can begin using this information immediately if they want to become a better manager.

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