

Management 101

What is management? What do managers do? How do I manage?

These are standard questions that most of us in the management profession have been asked more than once. And questions we asked once in our careers too. Here, then, is a basic look at management, a primer, Management 101 from my perspective.

Art and Science

Management is both art and science. It is the art of making people more effective than they would have been without you. The science is in how you do that. There are four basic pillars: plan, organize, direct, and monitor.

Make Them More Effective

Four workers can make 6 units in an eight-hour shift without a manager. If I hire you to manage them and they still make 6 units a day, what is the benefit to my business of having hired you? On the other hand, if they now make 8 units per day, you, the manager, have value.

The same analogy applies to service, or retail, or teaching, or any other kind of work. Can your group handle more customer calls with you than without? Sell higher value merchandise? Impart knowledge more effectively? Etc. That is the value of management - making a group of individual's more effective.

Basic Management Skill #1: Plan

Management starts with planning. Good management starts with good planning. Without a plan you will never succeed. If you happen to make it to the goal, it will have been by luck or chance and is not repeatable. You may make it as a flash-in-the-pan, an overnight sensation, but you will never have the track record of accomplishments of which success is made.

Figure out what your goal is (or listen when your boss tells you). Then figure out the best way to get there. What resources do you have? What can you get? Compare strengths and weaknesses of individuals and other resources. Will putting four workers on a task that takes 14 hours cost less than renting a machine that can do the same task with one worker in 6 hours? If you change the first shift from an 8 AM start to a 10 AM start, can they handle the early evening rush so you don't have to hire an extra person for the second shift?

Look at all the probable scenarios. Plan for them. Figure out the worst possible scenario and plan for that too. Evaluate your different plans and develop what, in your best judgment, will work the best and what you will do if it doesn't.

TIP: *One of the most often overlooked management planning tools is the most effective. Ask the people doing the work for their input.*

Basic Management Skill #2: Organize

Now that you have a plan, you have to make it happen. Is everything ready ahead of your group so the right stuff will get to your group at the right time? Is your group prepared to do its part of the plan? Is the downstream organization ready for what your group will deliver and when it will arrive?

Are the workers trained? Are they motivated? Do they have the equipment they need? Are there spare parts available for the equipment? Has purchasing ordered the material? Is it the right stuff? Will it get here on the appropriate schedule?

Do the legwork to make sure everything needed to execute the plan is ready to go, or will be when it is needed. Check back to make sure that everyone understands their role and the importance of their role to the overall success.

Basic Management Skill #3: Direct

Now flip the "ON" switch. Tell people what they need to do. I like to think of this part like conducting an orchestra. Everyone in the orchestra has the music in front of them. They know which section is playing which piece and when. They know when to come in, what to play, and when to stop again. The conductor cues each section to make the music happen. That's your job here. You've given all your musicians (workers) the sheet music (the plan). You have the right number of musicians (workers) in each section (department), and you've arranged the sections on stage so the music will sound best (you have organized the work). Now you need only to tap the podium lightly with your baton to get their attention and give the downbeat.

Basic Management Skill #4: Monitor

Now that you have everything moving, you have to keep an eye on things. Make sure everything is going according to the plan. When it isn't going according to plan, you need to step in and adjust the plan, just as the orchestra conductor will adjust the tempo.

Problems will come up. Someone will get sick. A part won't be delivered on time. A key customer will go bankrupt. That is why you developed a contingency plan in the first place. You, as the manager, have to be always aware of what's going on so you can make the adjustments required.

This is a constant process. When something is out of sync, you need to **Plan** a fix, **Organize** the resources to make it work, **Direct** the people who will make it happen, and continue to **Monitor** the effect of the change.

Is It Worth It?

Managing people is not easy. However, it can be done successfully. And it can be a very rewarding experience. Remember that management, like any other skill, is something that you can improve at with study and practice.

Assignment

Alone or with a partner, create a flyer, brochure, power point, prezi, etc. that will teach someone the basics of management. Requirements:

- Definition of what exactly being a Manager means.
- Summary of above article that covers the basics of management.
- Profile of a good manager.
 - Needs to be thorough
 - Colorful and reader friendly (do not cut and paste words you DO NOT UNDERSTAND!)
 - Error free
- You will not be presenting!