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First-Time Managers

>> While there are many books, articles and seminars on what it takes to be a strong manager, studies show that most people in managerial positions had little or no management experience or training before taking on their current roles. In addition, studies show that 50-55% of employees who moved up to supervisory, managerial or executive positions came from other roles inside the same firm.[i]

For these first-time managers, supervising others is a new responsibility—and a major challenge. Your company's productivity and ability to retain committed employees depend largely upon the skill of its managers. And when you put people without experience in leadership roles for the first time, they may feel overwhelmed.

Many companies prefer to promote first-time managers from within. It is generally believed that the prospect of promotion offers employees a reason to stay motivated, in addition to presenting a defined career path. Internal promotions are often key elements in a company's retention strategy and succession plan.

But promotions sometimes backfire and can just as easily derail careers as enhance them. Ironically, the very same skills that make someone appear to be an attractive candidate for advancement become less important once they are promoted and must then manage others.

When you are an individual contributor, you may think that if you work hard and follow company guidelines, one day you will find yourself promoted to management. Although such a promotion is often viewed as a destination, it is actually a point of divergence; a fork in the road less clearly marked than the old familiar path. Moving from a cubicle to an office requires answering the inevitable question: What now? The presumption is that because a person could do the former job capably, he or she can also excel at management. But the old job probably came with a clear job description and the new job may not.

First-time managers often have misperceptions of what it means to be a manager. Ask some new managers what their roles involve and they may start off by describing management's rights and privileges rather than its duties. Or they might simply say that being a manager means being "the boss." They may struggle to reconcile their initial expectations with a manager's real responsibilities.

First-time managers have to make sense of the complex, demanding and often conflicting expectations of many constituencies—subordinates, superiors, and peers.

The biggest change in both mind-set and behavior is moving from doing the work oneself to achieving results through the work of others.[ii] This learning process can be emotionally unsettling as managers have to *act* as managers before they understand what that role really entails. Without careful preparation and planning

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for success, a promotion can be a recipe for failure, for both the individual and the organization.

FIRST-TIME MANAGER SOLUTIONS

As an employer who wants to promote from within, what can you do to make sure you are setting people up for success rather then failure?

First, make sure you pick people who are competent and have what it takes to do the job. But how can you do that quickly and simply? By administering the Caliper Profile you can determine if candidates have the attributes necessary for

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success. Are they able to assert themselves? Rebound from difficulty? Think on their feet? Caliper's research has shown that the personality dynamics of successful managers differ from those of successful individual contributors, and for that matter, from those of successful leaders as well.[iii] Understanding these differences can be critical in planning a career path for individuals within your organization. And the Caliper Profile can help you answer these important questions.

Another indicator of success is past performance. However, it is important to not just look at traditional measures of an individual's skills and abilities, but also see things from the expanded viewpoint of team orientation and leadership qualities. In the past, have they helped, coached or mentored other people? Spent time with co-workers who were having difficulty to help them improve? In short, have they contributed to the success of others? If the answer is no, beware of promoting someone who is unlikely to meet your expectations in a managerial role.

Second, clearly communicate your expectations for their new role. Will they be required to start up a new unit? Maintain and grow an already high-performing operation? Turn around a failing group?

You need to have clearly defined criteria for success, in terms of both the right behaviors and the right results.[iv] Also,

be sure to provide a definite "breakaway point" from the previous position, so the person can hit the ground running in his or her new role.[v]

Third, provide management orientation, training, and career development programs before raising even outstanding individual contributors to management level, to help them move more smoothly into their new positions. Training can also be a way of reinforcing their buy-in to your company's goals, as well as enabling new managers to develop the competencies required for their expanded roles. Caliper Profiles used during the selection process can also help you tailor training programs to address specific areas for developmental improvement that may have been uncovered.

And finally, make sure your culture reward managers. What are the behaviors needed for success in a management role at your company? How do you measure those behaviors? And do you reward those behaviors? If so, how? If not, why not? You need to make your expectations known and then reward strong performance, before a first-time manager—or any manager—can be successful.

CALIPER'S APPROACH

Managers who fail to manage their people effectively are not bad people; they may simply lack the ability and knowledge to manage others effectively.

Caliper's approach can help you find the right people by designing a customized selection system for promoting internally. By integrating the Caliper Profile into the talent pool management process, we can help you identify and develop high-potential candidates for future promotional opportunities. This system can ensure that you are promoting the right people with the right dynamics for the role in question.

Caliper can also provide targeted training and development programs for managers who are already in place, as well as for those who express an interest in

moving into management. Our training is unique in that it treats all managers as individuals and is targeted to meet their particular needs. Using the Caliper Profile as a foundation, we help people to better understand their own personality dynamics as they relate to both individual job performance and team building, as well as provide tools and techniques to help them maximize their managerial effectiveness.

Our approach consists of individual evaluations, classroom workshops, coaching sessions, and ongoing progress measurement. This comprehensive model is designed to facilitate learning and development by giving people the plan, the knowledge, and the coaching they need to improve their performance and make long-lasting changes.

By taking the steps required to set an employee up for success instead of failure, your message will be clear. Companies that show their employees that their long-term development is a shared goal have a definite advantage in attracting the best applicants and keeping their top talent motivated, challenged and loyal.

RESOURCES

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iv Bossidy, L. & Charan, R. (2002) *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*. Crown Business.

v Watkins, M. (2003) *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels*. Harvard Business School Press.

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