



Are your Managers Managing?

Many managers fail to give proper attention to their core responsibility - achieving goals for their business by getting the best from the people they work with – because they're too busy working on tasks, duties and problems that really should be delegated to the people they manage. But why? Chris Baxter is on hand to explain.

Managers, from Managing Director to Team Leader, usually have at least two jobs. The first, quite obviously is being a manager. The other typically involves performing tasks and duties that are part of the functioning of their department or business. For example: managing projects, selling, preparing quotations, defining specifications, dealing with minor problems, writing minutes, and bookkeeping. Andy Stanley encourages managers to “*only do what only you can do*” and delegate the rest. But far too often I find that ineffective managers spend so much time doing things that other people can do that they don't spend enough time really making a difference.

Mistakenly they believe that only they should handle the more difficult and complex tasks and consequently burden their to-do list with things should really be delegated. Ineffective managers therefore lead teams that are far less productive than they could be because their manager is too busy with the wrong things to provide the necessary support and guidance.

So why do managers not do enough managing? There are two reasons.

1. **Short-termism.** Many managers measure their contribution incorrectly and monitor their usefulness by tracking the quantity work they get through each day - something that may have been valid before they became a manager. But an effective manager's contribution does not reap dividends overnight. Getting the best from your people and achieving important goals takes persistence, patience and time. If you are drawn toward little things this will be at the expense of the big things that ultimately make a long-term difference. So allow yourself time to make a big difference and measure your contribution against the big things.
2. **I don't know how to be a manager.** Only a minority of managers have received much management training as often it is hoped that a new manager will just figure it out for themselves. However, good management is not easy and there are very few people who have enough natural talent to figure out this complex discipline all on their own. If you give a person a choice of two tasks: one they feel comfortable with, and another where they don't really know how to do it, most people will gravitate toward the former; which explains why unskilled managers don't give top priority to their managerial duties.

So what should managers focus on?

The things that will improve the performance of their people, achieve important goals, and generally improve their organisation. Things like forward planning, quality one-to-one time with staff and colleagues, team meetings, listening to customers, gathering information about the market, setting clear expectations about direction and performance, driving through key improvements, helping people to enjoy their work, and making key policy-shaping decisions.

How can you change your focus?

Managers who don't do enough managing because they're too busy with other stuff, inevitably realise that they're not keeping up with the workload and ask for help. Unfortunately the help they ask for usually isn't support in learning how to be a good manager, but the recruitment of junior managers who can help them with the managerial workload. Now a department that needs one manager has two or more, none of whom know how to do the job properly and spend most of their time doing something other than managing. In fact an additional layer of management will probably just increase



costs and slow communication both up and down the organisation. So first of all find out how much managing your existing managers do and if its not enough, don't recruit because it won't fix the problem.

Always put your management responsibilities first, always, and only once you've properly attended to these go to work on the other tasks and responsibilities you have. If you find you that you subsequently don't have enough time to complete your non-managerial duties, then don't compromise on being an effective manager, instead do what good managers do and delegate the tasks you don't have time to do.

