



# SETTING MANAGERS UP FOR SUCCESS

5 CRITICAL SKILLS  
TO ENSURE MANAGEMENT  
SUCCESS

By Sue Jones

**A**t a time when unemployment rates are at their lowest in decades and talent is harder to find, it is now more important than ever to focus on growing and developing management talent within your company. Both new and experienced managers require ongoing coaching, development, and support to strengthen their knowledge and management skills. Your managers have the greatest impact on retaining and engaging your workforce. Let's make sure they are successful.

When it comes time to promote someone from your team to a management position, ask yourself the following questions, "How have I set my employees up for success? And are they prepared to step into a management role?" Based on my experience, the answer to these questions usually falls somewhere in between "kind of" and "sort of." We naturally assume that when employees are good at what they do they will be great managers.

We all know that managers are key to employee engagement and retention, yet we often find that they are not equipped with the knowledge and tools they need to successfully lead people. A recent study by Gallup<sup>1</sup> found that up to 70 percent of the variance in employee performance can be attributed to the quality of their managers.

Managing others successfully requires more than just technical experience. Developing your manager's confidence to select, hire, and

retain the right team; evaluate and manage the teams' performance; and the manager's ability to provide ongoing feedback is key to ensuring his or her success. Listed below are five critical skills managers need to develop and become adept to ensure their success as leaders in your business.

## 1 THE ABILITY TO IDENTIFY SKILLS AND TO MAKE GOOD HIRING DECISIONS.

I think a lot of us naturally assume that managers are skilled at selecting, interviewing, and making good hiring decisions just because they are "managers." Given that most businesses spend a significant amount of their operating budgets on workforce expenses, it is interesting to note that very few measure the success of hiring managers in their ability to select the right candidates.

Managers need coaching and training on interviewing—what to ask, and more important, what not to ask. They also need tools and resources to assist them with the process. Creating an interview evaluation guide or score card, and training your managers on how to use these resources, can help level the playing field and create an objective basis for comparison of the candidates, which can lead to better hiring decisions over time.

Having the right people in the right place at the right time starts with your manager's ability to assess his or her team's knowledge, skills, and abilities.

## 2 DELEGATING TO OTHERS

Have you ever heard of the seagull management style? Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager* says, “The most common management style is seagull management. A manager gives you a task, disappears, and then only returns when you make a mistake—they fly in, make a lot of noise, dump on you, then fly out.” Providing work assignments and delegating to employees is integral to getting things done efficiently and effectively. Managers do too much themselves stating:

- It is quicker to just do it myself than to take the time to train someone else right now.
- My team is too busy; I can do the work myself.
- I want it done right, so I will do it myself.

These are all common reactions when it comes to delegating. One thing I often share with managers is to focus on doing the work that only you can do.” Effective delegation skills provide managers with more time to focus on high-payoff activities, things that are important to work on, and result in revenue for the business and impact the bottom line.

Time is a precious commodity. Developing your manager’s ability to delegate is key to his or her success.

## 3 MANAGING PERFORMANCE, COACHING, AND PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Managing performance is more than just a once-a-year performance review. It is an everyday activity that managers need to embrace. Employees want clarity about what is expected of them. They want goals and feedback about their performance, and they want recognition when they achieve those goals.

In a recent study by Mercer<sup>2</sup> the authors reported that only 12 percent of employees rank their managers as excellent at helping staff improve performance, and just 11 percent reported that their managers excel at coaching, supporting, and developing staff. How well do you think your employees would rate your managers on this skill set?

In a recent article in the Spring 2017 issue of VRM Intel Magazine, which focuses on managing employee performance, I provide several tools and resources to assist managers with managing performance. Introducing practices such as coaching journals, one-to-one meetings, competency anchoring, and “Keep, Start, Stop” techniques into your managers’ tool kit is a great start toward developing their self-confidence with coaching and providing feedback.

## 4 DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

New managers rarely come to the table with “honed” decision-making skills. We are asking more of our managers. We want our managers to be good at motivating, engaging, and retaining employees, and we want them to make informed decisions. A manager’s indecisiveness and inability to make a timely decision can create chaos and confusion, greatly impeding the productivity and efficiency of the staff.

Most people acquire good decision-making skills through trial and error. This is often accomplished by providing your managers with decision-making opportunities. Whether it is selecting new software, making a hiring decision, or something as simple as approving schedule changes, they are all opportunities for managers to practice and improve their decision-making capabilities.

Clearly defining the level of decision-making for your managers is key. Managers must be capable, and they also need to feel confident in their ability to make decisions quickly within the guidelines of your company policies and structure. Letting your managers know what kinds of decisions they can make and the types of decisions they need to run up the flagpole is a great place to start to ensure your managers’ decision-making success.

## 5 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The ability to understand and manage one’s own emotions and the emotions of others is something your managers need to develop. The importance of emotional intelligence (EQ) is now being recognized as an important leadership skill for managers, even more so than their IQ.

Unfortunately, far too many people lack basic emotional intelligence. They simply don’t have enough self-awareness or the social skills necessary to work in fast-paced, constantly changing environments. Your managers need to become adept at recognizing their emotions, understanding what their emotions are telling them, and noticing how their emotions affect employees around them. On the flip side, managers also need to understand their perceptions of others and how others may feel to be able to manage work relationships more effectively. Without an ability to see other points of view, managers will struggle to pull a team together to produce the results you desire.

The good news is EQ, unlike IQ, can be improved upon. Developing your employees’ competence with self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills is a worthy investment to ensure their success as managers.

Training, developing, and growing your internal management team is a competitive business advantage and well worth the investment of your time and resources.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/182792/managers-account-vari-ance-employee-engagement.aspx>

<sup>2</sup>“Future-proofing HR: Bridging the Gap Between Employers and Employees.” Mercer, 2016.

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