

Some Basic Management Suggestions for Mid-Managers

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Abstract: There are many terms in managing a university are connected with management. This article mainly explores the duties the managers should take in a university as well as the basic skills they have to get.

Keywords: university management; duty of managers; basic skills

Obviously, it would help you be a good manager if you had the formal training that some of your colleagues had but all of us know managers who are good managers but business or management was not their major in university. If you have and use common sense; good communications skills; are willing to listen to, observe, and learn from others; and want to be a good manager, then you probably will be a good manager.

I. What is management?

There are many definitions of management and what a manager does. These definitions may use different words but they are all very similar. We can say that management refers to the activities involved in directing an organization of part of an organization. Organization can refer to any type of organization. It could be a business or a hospital or a school.

II. Activities in management

We can say the activities involved in manage-

ment are: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. This is a generally accepted definition. Some people might add other functions like staffing that this definition includes as part of a broader function like organizing. We can say that organizing has two parts: organizing and staffing. If you ask what does a manager do, we can say that a manager plans, organizes, leads, and controls.

Planning is an ongoing process. Ongoing means that it is continuous and happens all the time. Planning is the process of developing the organization's mission and objectives and how they will be done. Planning is both broad and narrow. Broad is when it refers to the overall mission; narrow is when it refers to a very specific tactic or strategy for accomplishing a specific goal. For example, in China, setting the broad mission involves the Education Ministry in Beijing, the Education Ministry for your province, and the top leaders of your university, people like the Party Secretary, the President, and possibly a few other top leaders.

A president may also be involved with the

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narrow missions, the strategies for accomplishing a specific goal but it is really up to the mid-level managers to ensure that these specific goals are accomplished. Mid-level managers and supervisors should never underestimate your importance to the university or your organization. If the specific goals are not accomplished, and this is the job of the mid-level managers, then the broad mission cannot be accomplished.

About organizing, be sure to remember that it includes both organizing and staffing. Organizing is establishing the internal organization structure of the organization. The focus is on division, coordination, and control of tasks and the flow of information within the organization.

When organizing, managers distribute authority to others. That is, your boss may give you the authority to do certain things or you may give the people who work for you the authority to do some things. Even though you may have assigned the authority to someone else, you still have the responsibility to be sure that the tasks are done.

Staffing is filling and keeping filled with qualified people all positions in the business. Staffing activities include things like recruiting, hiring, training, evaluating, and compensating. Your universities have personnel or human resources offices to help you with this. It is very important that you maintain good relations with these offices. They can help you with a lot of things, including finding applicants for positions you need to fill, advising you on training and evaluating employees and will give you guidance about compensation. Compensation, of course, refers to the pay and benefits that employees receive.

Directing is influencing people's behavior through motivation, communication, group dynamics, leadership, and discipline. The purpose of directing is to get all people working together to accomplish the organization's mission and objectives and also to help them accomplish their own career

objectives.

The fourth is called controlling and it is a way of helping to be sure that the people who work for you do a good job and contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of your office or department. Controlling is a four-step process:

The first step is to establishing performance standards based on the organization's objectives. That is, you should be able to tell, and preferably with a written job description, each person you supervise exactly what they are expected to do. This will include their working hours and what their functions are. For example, if you are a department head or dean in one of the teaching departments or colleges, most of the people you supervise will be teachers and you must be able to tell them things like their normal teaching hours, how many subjects they will teach each semester, if they must keep office hours in addition to teaching, the dress standards if you have them, and everything else involved with their teaching position.

The next step is to have a way or ways to measure and report the actual performance of the person. For a teacher, you can measure such things as - is the teacher present to teach all classes as scheduled, the performance of students on tests at the end of the class, the way the teacher works as part of a team when assigned to do work with others, and other things.

So far, we've said you need first to establish the standards for a position and tell the employee what is expected in doing the job. Then, we said there must be a way to measure the effectiveness of the person. You must then compare what is expected of the person, and we are using a teacher as an example, to the job the person is actually doing. Is the teacher meeting all your expectations? If not, then you need to decide what actions you can take to help the person do a better job. This is the third step in the process and is taking corrective action as necessary. This will involve meeting with the

person and discuss what needs to be done. If the person is meeting all your expectations, you should tell this to him or her. A little praise can go a long way in motivating people to want to do a good job. In fact, you should still schedule regular meetings individually with the people who work for you to discuss their job performance.

III. Competences of a good manager

Let's talk now about the different abilities, called competencies, that you need to be a good manager. Management experts generally agree on what they are but the importance of each one depends a lot on the job you have. You need to remember that a competency that might not be so important in your job now might become important in your next job so you should be aware of all of them. While there is no order of importance to these six competencies, the one that is at or near the top on all lists is the communications competency. You must be able to communicate.

First, let's list the six competencies and then say something about each one of them. The competencies are:

- * Communications Competency
- * Planning and Administration Competency
- * Teamwork Competency
- * Strategic Action Competency
- * Global Awareness Competency
- * Self-Management Competency

1. Communications Competency

If you cannot communicate, then it's impossible to manage. You must be able to get your ideas and messages across to other people and you must also listen to and understand the messages and ideas coming to you from others. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are all important. If you feel you are weak in one of these areas, then take some time and work on it. You should always remember that communications are two-way, be-

tween you and another person or between you and a group of persons. As a manager, you cannot just give directions and instructions to others, you must also listen to what they have to say. It's a lot like when you communicate with your boss or supervisor, you think that what you have to say is important and you want your boss to hear it; it's just as important that the people who work for you believe that you listen to them and that you consider what they say to be important.

I said earlier that the communications competency is the most important of the six management competencies. There is no particular order of importance to the other competencies and their importance will depend, in part, on the requirements of your job.

2. Planning and Administration Competency

The planning and administration competence refers to your ability to plan your work, not just what you plan to work on today or this week or this month but throughout the year and your ability to organize your plan and your administrative duty to be sure that you follow your plan and that it is effectively done. A lot of us, most of us in fact, can make good plans.

After the plan is made, remember what we said earlier about planning being an ongoing process. Your plans should constantly be reviewed and changes to it made as needed. One of the hardest things to do with a plan is to follow the plan. Sometimes, it's very easy to get distracted from your plan and not work enough on the most important parts of it. Following your plan, including making adjustments to it as necessary, is just as important as having a good plan.

One way to remember what we just said about planning is to think about this expression: "Plan your work and work your plan."

3. Teamwork competence

Teamwork is also important for your success and its value should not be underestimated. As a manager, remember that you cannot do everything by yourself. You need the help and support of the people working for you and with you. They are your team.

You all know that a group or a team working together can accomplish much more than each individual member of the group just working alone. We call this synergism. This means that the sum or total of the team working together is greater than the total of its individual parts. For example, five people working separately and not together on projects have a total value of five in what they produce; these same five people, working together as a team, will have a total value of more than five, perhaps a value of as much as ten, because each contributes to and adds to what all the others do.

4. Strategic Action Competency

The strategic action competency becomes more important as you get promoted and move to higher positions within the university or organization. As a mid-level manager, you should be aware of how your actions influence and contribute to the long-range or strategic plans of the university. Also, remember what we said earlier in that you are more concerned with the tactical or short-range goals of the university. Accomplishing these goals makes it possible for the strategic goals to also be accomplished.

5. Global Awareness Competency

We live in a global society today. Your country is influenced by what happens in other parts of the world and the other parts of the world are influenced by what happens in China. What students learn here should not just prepare them to survive and succeed in a totally Chinese environment but should teach them how to succeed in a global environment, whether it is here in China or in another

part of the world. Your graduates will have contact with foreigners and should be prepared to interact with them. Your city, Linyi, has been identified by some business experts, as one of the ten best future locations for foreign investment. Be aware of what's happening in a global sense in Linyi, in other parts of Shandong Province, in the rest of China, and how China interacts with other countries and be prepared to help pass this on to the students. This is what we mean when we refer to the global awareness competency.

6. Self-Management Competency

The self-management competency is also important. If you cannot manage yourself, how can you manage others? This also means managing all aspects of your life. If you do not do a good job of managing your personal life, then this will usually have a negative effect on how well you do your job as a manager. At work, you need to manage your resources well and this includes managing your human resources, the people who work with you, and also managing your budget and other resources well. You need to be a good manager of time and everything else that influences your job.

So far, we've talked in general terms about some of the things a manager does - a manager plans, a manager organizes, a manager directs, and a manager controls. We also named the six competencies a manager should have and started with communications and then we ended our discussion with the self-management competency, concluding with the need to be a good manager of time.

IV. Leadership and Skills and Attitudes in it

We want to talk some now about leadership. This is a subject that, like the other subjects we have mentioned today, we could talk about for a long time. In fact, some universities in other countries now offer Master's degrees or MBA's in leadership. A lot has been written about the importance

of managers being good leaders. Like other things, definitions of leadership will vary but most of them are similar. Leadership is a relationship between those who want to lead and those who choose to follow. Just as there are some people who want to be leaders, there are others who want to be followers. I hope that all of you who are in management jobs want to be leaders.

A basic definition of leadership is that leadership is a relationship between the leader and those who follow this leader. The people who selected you for your positions either believe you are a leader or have the potential to be a leader. There is no simple process to becoming a good leader. It is something you need to work on and some need to work more than others.

Today, we want to discuss some skills and attitudes that help people become good leaders. There are skills that people either should have or should develop to become good leaders. First, I want to review seven personal characteristics or skills that will help you become a better leader. Some of you already have some of these skills. All of us should know what they are and, even the ones we already have, should make an effort to improve them. We tell students that learning is a lifelong activity; it is the same for us also.

1. Receptivity

This is a listening skill and means that you will listen to the ideas and opinions of others. It means that you will try to understand their ideas and opinions. The people to whom you are listening must believe that you are listening and that you think what they say is important. You need to have good listening skills and empathy (understanding).

2. Initiative

Initiative means the ability to begin or follow through energetically. Leadership frequently requires action - that you do something or make a de-

cision. Leaders must act to bring ideas to the attention of others. The leader must also help others understand the idea or plan and the leader must follow through. As a leader, you cannot sit around and wait for things to happen. You must show initiative and take action to make things happen and these should be things that help you accomplish your goals.

3. Cooperation

We all know what cooperation is - working or acting together for a common purpose. We referred to this earlier today when we talked about the importance of teamwork and how the results of a group of people working as a team will be greater than the results of the same group trying to work independently. You need and must have the cooperation and support of others to make your plans and ideas work. You must understand that your best ideas for change will be yours to do by yourself if you do not include others. The skill involved here is your skill in working as part of a team yourself as well as having the ability to encourage others to work with you as part of your team.

4. Humility

No one wants to work with a person who thinks that he or she is better than everyone else. You may have a higher position than other people, you may have more education and training, or you might be older but all of this does not mean you are a better person than the next person. It means only that you may have more skills or experience. You must have the ability of not showing feelings that you are better than other people. Another way of saying this is that you should be modest when referring to yourself. You must know and give others the impression that you know that your ideas are not always better or worse than someone else's. You should also understand that even good ideas can be improved by the review and opinions of oth-

ers.

5. Collaboration

I usually say that collaboration is advanced cooperation. It is similar to cooperation but it usually requires more work and more consideration of everyone's role or part in the action or project being done. This involves identifying the needs of everyone involved in an issue or project and working toward meeting their needs.

6. Transparency

Trust is essential in the leader/follower relationship. This refers to the openness required for leadership. The level of trust and the commitment to change will be the highest when nothing is hidden; that is, there are no hidden agendas and the leader or manager is not keeping secrets from the other people. We say the relationship is transparent when both leaders and followers see and understand the others' motives and know what is expected. If the people who work for you have a feeling of trust for you and believe that you are telling them everything they should know about their projects or activities, then they will want to work harder for you.

In our business colleges and departments, students learn about different models, and investment model or the income statement model and the balance sheet. Models are important. Sometimes you see models for leadership and these are important. In management and leadership, trust is important. If people trust you and believe you, they will want to work harder for you.

7. Cultivated influence

Everybody has an influence and some have

more than others. You must identify the resources that will help you with this and apply them. For most of you, your best resources will be other people. Then, you become a more persuasive person and have more power. Identify your resources, maintain contact with them, assist them when possible, and this is what cultivation is.

These abilities or skills we just discussed - receptivity, initiative, cooperation, humility, collaboration, transparency or trust, and cultivated influence - are skills that you can develop or, if you already have them, develop them further. These will help you be good managers and leaders. Leaders are judged by their actions; things like how you spend your time, your commitment to things you say you support, and your other actions. It will help you to be a good leader if you follow what we call the Golden Rule of Leadership - Do what you say you will do.

Let me end this short discussion about leadership by saying that people want and need leadership. They want leaders who will put their what they believe in first. Leadership should be about "us" and not about "them" and all of us must take responsibility for doing what we say we will do. If you say you will do it, then do it.

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