



THE EVOLUTION FROM MANAGER TO LEADER

How a shift in focus increases the odds for success

BY BRIAN BRAUDIS

Transitioning managers into leaders requires calculated planning and hands-on training. Unfortunately, managers are often promoted into leadership positions with the presumption that their current level of effectiveness will continue into their new role. This can cause managers to trip on their way up the ladder.

Rather than make assumptions or create impossible expectations, it is prudent for senior leaders to put a plan into place to increase the odds for success. With an aggressive strategy, senior leaders can mitigate the potential stumbling that often occurs. It starts with ensuring you have the right candidate in mind for

the promotion and then cultivating their skills and knowledge. In other words, hire for attitude and train for ability.

Cultivating Leaders Early On

The transition process should start long before the manager takes on

their new position. Early on, the selected candidates should be groomed through extensive training, cross-program experiences and leadership development.

Strong support systems must also be in place, including a network of colleagues to model the way and offer reassurance. Having mentors and coaches who monitor progress can reinforce the training and help cultivate those newly acquired skills. Through this strategic process, the soon-to-be leader will gain a deeper understanding of the leadership landscape and be better prepared for the expectations that are sure to follow.

Grasping the Change in Focus

It is imperative for leaders to recognize that a new role requires a shift in focus, particularly in the following areas:

1. From Production To Outcomes

The immediate challenge for managers is to shift their mindset from making widgets to influencing outcomes. This is inherent in the leadership process. As the new leader begins working with department heads and stakeholders, they need to operate from a new perspective—a long-term view with the realization that short-term milestones are needed for successful implementation. The role of the leader is to influence the long-term, while being fully aware of what's needed to achieve the end result.

2. From Specialist To Visionary

Managers thrive as specialists. They have expertise within their department and a good understanding of how they function relative to other areas of the organization. But that's not enough for a leader. Leaders must be able to translate information, patterns and trends into the language of efficiencies, profit and direction. Leaders must harness what is known now with the trends they envision for the future. An organization's future success relies on this. Vision can be complex and multifaceted, but nothing can beat everyone pulling in the same direction.

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3. From One To All

Managers typically have the responsibility of managing staff and monitoring their daily activities. Leaders, on the other hand, don't manage people as much as they lead direction. The classic mistake is for new leaders to over-manage and under-lead. This can be especially problematic if there are lingering departmental biases. Colleagues can help by being patient as these new leaders become more experienced in shifting their focus from managing one department to serving all of them.

4. From Solving Problems To Anticipating Them

Strictly speaking, managers and leaders are keen problem solvers. But one of the finer points of leadership—and where leaders earn their keep—is seeing problems before they happen. If a leader can identify slowing growth or a decline in earnings early on and proactively put things in place to avoid potential downsizing, this not only benefits the organization but each and every employee as well.

5. From Worker To Learner

Leadership is not about knowing everything—it's about continuous learning. It's vital that new leaders make this shift from a working manager to a learning leader. Achieving a level of

competency and excellence requires a desire for ongoing learning. As they work to cultivate an open mind and flexibility, they must also demonstrate a commitment to relentless self-improvement.

When developing leaders are hand-selected, cultivated and afforded the organizational backing necessary for success, it's more than an exercise in succession. It's a testament to an effective leadership strategy that reinforces an organization's culture. Over time, this effort leads to the ultimate competitive advantage. 🌟



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