

Becoming a Great Manager

There are some people that believe that a great manager is born with the skills required to motivate and lead. Other people believe that, like most business skills, management is a learned competence that almost anyone with the ambition and discipline to study can acquire. Regardless of where you stand on the nature-versus-nurture debate, the undeniable truth is that management – as in leadership plus administration – can make all the difference in how a company performs and the value it creates.

Many experts believe that great management is really the exercise of common sense. Tudog does not disagree with the notion that common sense is a key component of great management, however we would add that its application needs to be at the exact moments when the common sense is most needed. The awareness that the situation demands great management and the ability to conjure up the proper blend of leader and strategist at the right time is the essence of great management. The courage of the great manager to do what has to be done with the confidence that inspires others is what separates mediocre leaders from those that transform companies and rise to greatness. Tudog has long pondered this critical skill and has concluded that it is comprised of five components. They are:

1. **Gatekeeper** - The great manager makes certain to have access to information and materials he/she needs to make the right decision. By having his/her finger on the pulse he/she is able to both spot prospective problems before they become full fledged crises. Moreover, the information provides the foundation upon which a quick decision can be made. The control of information, and its proper dissemination, also allows the leaders to gain respect and subordinate compliance, as the information controlled is needed and coveted by all members of the team.

2. **Guardian** – The great manager protects his team from the uncertainty of bad decisions and the whims of company policies made in haste and with insufficient data. The strong leader makes certain that his/her team remains focused on the important tasks and sets goals that are simultaneously ambitious and possible. Moreover, the great manager makes sure to be there when a member of his/her team has a problem, helping to resolve the issue. By being the guardian, the leader remains the center of strength for the team, the individual to whom each member turns for leadership and guidance.

3. **Planner** – The great manager knows how to anticipate need and plan for the acquiring and allocation of resources as they become needed. The team members rely on the leader to provide them with the tools they need to accomplish their mission and will look to the leader as new needs arise. The ability of the manager to foresee the need and understand how to acquire all that will be necessary places not a burden, but an instrument of allegiance at his/her disposal.

4. **Standard Bearer** – The great manager knows how to both provide his/her team with the freedom needed to explore opportunities and solutions and experiment with ideas, and the boundaries within which acceptable activities take place. The leader sets the standards by which others will be judged, including when it comes to risk taking, accepting responsibility for actions, ethical behavior, and the enthusiasm and commitment with which the assigned tasks are approached. Setting, and more importantly adhering, to high standards provides the manager with the ability to demand

a great deal from his/her team, as well as the moral grounds on which to discipline violations.

5. **Visionary** – The great manager offers up a vision of the future that is concurrently exciting and realistic. The excitement is generated not only by the goals set, but by the belief of the team members, inspired by the leader, that the goals can and will be met. By demonstrating not only the picture of the future, but also the path to getting there, the great manager shows his faith in his/her team to meet the challenge, thereby encouraging and pushing the entire team to excellence.

Being a great manager goes beyond being a competent leader or able administrator. The elements separating the functional from the fantastic are the very characteristics some would claim are innate, while others would claim are learned. Either way, the difference between a competent manager and a great one can be the difference between a company that inches along and one that soars. That alone is reason enough to strive to be a great manager.

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