



Be *Masterful.*

**Managers
and Development
in the Information**

Age

Organizations are more keenly aware than ever of the primary challenge of our age: mastering “permanent white water” (i.e., change) in order to remain competitive. One key to this challenge is the design of increasingly powerful human performance technologies. One of the most striking examples of these changing technologies is the evolution we’re seeing from the **heroic model** of management (which emphasizes a command-and-control approach to planning, motivating, and coordinating employees) to the **manager-as-developer** model (which stresses empowerment and which is more interpersonally intensive and consultative in nature). The manager-as-developer counsels team members who are in the process of self-assessment, goal setting, and self-development and encourages them to change, instead of just reacting in short intense bursts to “critical incidents” or to a performance appraisal imperative. Recognize that this is a significantly more impactful use of a manager’s time and energy and represents a more proactive (i.e., less heroic) management style than the reactive, I’m-the-leader-you’re-the-follower model of old.

A second human performance technology that is being powerfully impacted in our new age is the whole area of management development itself. In the past, the sole function of management development was to facilitate advancement (i.e., “training” prepares people to do their current jobs better, while “development” prepares them for their next job). However, in recent years, management and executive development initiatives have begun to drive a number of other key business objectives, as well:

Key Objectives for The Organization

- Identify reservoirs of talent (aka intellectual capital) and channel them appropriately (career tracking and succession planning).
- Groom high potentials.
- Help minimize mismatches between what a key contributor wants and what the company needs.
- Assist employees in developing and increasing their self-awareness (aka emotional intelligence) and in better understanding their own strengths and limitations.
- Create leaders and increase individual autonomy at lower and lower levels within the company.
- Design, integrate, and implement an HR strategy as a *core* component of the organization’s overall strategic business objectives.
- Train managers to be potent mentors.
- Integrate the overall approach to management development with other human resource processes: performance management, career development, recruiting/transfer/promotion, forecasting, and compensation.

Key Objectives for The Individual

- Be more proactive about self-development.
- Take more control of one's career (i.e., be more questioning; plateau by choice; create more degrees of freedom).
- Pursue self-development for its own sake and as the motivational driver of goal achievement.
- Participate in an active self-/career-development partnership with one's employer.
- Find more varied paths to personal satisfaction.
- "Retool" yourself for the information age: enhance your ability to manage change, take risks, handle ambiguity, exhibit interpersonal finesse, collaborate, build partnerships and teams, and so forth.

Finally, one of the most powerful ways to realize the extraordinary potential of these two new orientations—the manager-as-developer and the broad impact of development experiences—is to integrate managers into the development program of each of their people. This approach yields any number of benefits to both the individual and the organization (and the manager, too), as well as maximizing the changes made by the individual who is participating in the development process. In this way, learning leaves the limiting confines of the classroom and becomes much more akin to a real apprenticeship experience. Performance enhancement is much more likely to occur and to be reflected in a person's day-to-day functioning when the behavior change process is both experiential *and* linked to key others in the person's workaday life. Apprenticing is an age-old concept, but it remains a highly potent approach to development and building bench strength.

And, yes, managers will also need to become adept at this new role of a partner/coach/advisor/consultant to the "apprentice". But, of course, these are roles that are now increasingly central to the overall successful functioning of the contemporary manager. So, it is striking how *holistic* the new approach to performance enhancement is. If this potential for integration and consistency across human resource initiatives is tapped to its fullest, then organizations will have a tremendous opportunity to achieve the kind of key objectives they're striving for:



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