



Making the Mental Shift from Subject Matter Expert to Manager



Managing people is challenging.

Let me just be honest in putting that out there. I'd like to be able to tell you that it gets easier as you climb to higher levels, but I'd be lying. Every VP and CEO I have worked with has had people-management struggles. So, if you are struggling or frustrated, know that it is normal to be challenged by the people-management part of being a manager, at any level!

Sometimes, that's why it's easier to go back to your comfort zone and focus on the subject of the work you now oversee. You were most likely a subject-matter expert and your skill and knowledge of that subject helped get you

Maine Women's Network

Tuesday, May 14th 2019

11:30 am - 1:30 pm

*Everything is Negotiable -
Do it Skillfully*



Speaker Joy Kacik
Kacik Consulting Services LLC

Come learn rules, skills and tips from a seasoned negotiator to boost your confidence and bring you results. This session addresses key skills in negotiations to apply at any level – whether you are a beginner or have negotiated before. It will increase your confidence and show you simple actionable steps that bring big returns. A complimentary coaching session is included.

You will leave knowing:

- How to ask for what you want
- Assessing your needs and theirs
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- The top six mistakes to avoid in negotiations

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promoted. I'm betting you also enjoyed the satisfaction of crossing things off the to-do list. That feels good to just about everybody.

However, if you allow yourself to stay in the comfort zone of your subject-matter expertise, in the long term, your success is likely to wane. That's because, as a manager, your role and responsibilities are different and you are accountable to see that others carry out their responsibilities. It takes staying out of the weeds in order to do that. Your accomplishments may be far less tangible and it may take much longer before you start to see results in a new way, at a new level. So be prepared to have some patience.

So how do you begin? Here are five steps I suggest:

1. Understand what results you are accountable for
2. Get clear on your focus
3. Create the vision that will inspire others
4. Involve your team in creating the strategies
5. Lead, follow and get out of the way

1. Understand what results you are accountable for.

The shift involves understanding what results you are accountable for, and not as much the "how" of getting there. Start by asking questions, exploring and gaining a clear understanding of your boss's goals, the goals of your organization's strategic plan and where your specific role and team fits into those goals.

2. Get clear on your focus. When you are clear on what results you need to generate from your team or department to support the goals/needs of those above you and beside you, then you will have your focus. **In communicating to your team, communicate the WHAT, and allow your team to use their skills to figure out the HOW.** Maybe you've been a manager for a long time and if

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In his book, **The Next Level**, author Scott Elbin shares research from ongoing 360-degree feedback that, "The highest rated behavior for high-potential leaders... is: 'Demonstrates a strong desire to see his/her team succeed.' One of the lowest-rated behaviors is: 'Spends less time using his/her functional skills and more time encouraging team members to use theirs.'" What this feedback is saying is that leaders need to do much more of the low-rated behavior – which is using less of their subject-matter expertise and more helping others to recognize, develop and use more of their own expertise.

Another relevant piece he shares is "The lowest rated behavior related to Defining What vs. Telling How... is: "Regularly takes time to step back and define or redefine what needs to be done." This is hard to do if you are in the weeds. Managing requires the big-picture view.

You can't see this:

so, it's always good to revisit your focus to be sure your goals are still aligned properly within the organization.

3. Create the vision that will inspire others. Once your focus is clear, then you can ask yourself, "How do I create a vision for my team/department that is clear, inspiring and motivating to my direct-reports?" If you are to be a great leader, it is incumbent upon you to create a vision that excites your team members to follow your leadership and to make the vision a reality. Visions do not get created if you are in the weeds. If you are ready to sneak back into your subject matter comfort zone, think about that. Often the work of management, and particularly the higher you go, is more about observing, thinking and strategizing than in doing. So slow down, step back, take a deep breath and figure out where you need to be going and how you can inspire others to go with you. A vision that is inspiring has a lot to do with helping others see the reason and the value in their work, how it makes a difference and the impact it has in others' lives and the world. Where you can use specific stories of how it impacted the life of one individual can often be far more powerful than generalities of the impact.

4. Involve your team in creating the strategies for reaching the goals. By involving your team in creating the strategies, you are showing your confidence in them and creating buy-in at the same time. Make space for them to come together as a team to brainstorm, discuss, prioritize and fine-tune their ideas into really great strategies. This is great team-building and energizes them. Those who are involved in planning and designing the trip are usually much more excited about making the journey enjoyable and successfully reaching the destination.

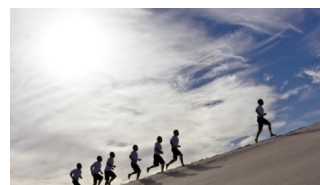
5. Lead, follow and get out the way. Once you have made the direction clear and you and your team has set the strategies in place, your role is to lead or coach when the team is challenged, off course slightly, or maybe even a little lost. I once coached an individual who worked the majority



If you're spending your time here:



Below are two visuals. Here is a challenge for you. Look at one or both and journal what thoughts come to mind. **As a leader, what is necessary for this visual to become the reality for you and your direct-reports?** What is it you want for yourself and your team and what can you do to inspire and create that reality?



of her time in research. She was struggling to see her own value as she was not a hands-on researcher, but rather a manager of researchers. After asking more about what she did, I shared with her that what she was describing was helping researchers get “unstuck”! How valuable is that? Research wouldn't produce results if the researchers got stuck and stopped as a result. Be the manager who leads and coaches to help your team members get unstuck, even if, and particularly if, it's not the way you would have done it. A good manager allows people the freedom to do things their own way as long as they are effective. That's the following part. Leading also means helping to remove obstacles that get in the way of your team's success. When your team is on target, on schedule and plowing forward, then step aside and get out of their way. While you're doing that, pay attention and note what they're doing, how they're doing it, what's working and how well they are working with each other. Follow up then with recognition, praise and celebration for the unique contributions of individuals and the success of the whole team. When you give praise, be specific, using all that you observed and recorded while you were stepping aside to let them work. Also, be sure to take opportunities to praise your folks to and in front of leaders above you.

I also want to address the issue of jumping in with your own subject-matter expertise. It is easy to do that when folks get stuck – you've got the answers and can show them, tell them or give advice. It can also be a go-to behavior for managers to jump in and do some of the work when workloads are pushing the limits of your team. One reason I see managers do that is that it feels good again to be showing your expertise – it's familiar territory that once again reminds you of something you're good at and is a boost for your own confidence. However, I want to throw in a big caution sign for both of these situations. First of all, what happens to the individual when you tell, show or offer advice to give them the answers? Maybe they'll be temporarily grateful because it solves the immediate

Just this week, I spoke with a manager about the subject of this newsletter. He shared with me a couple of challenges he has experienced in making the shift to manager. First, because others in the company were accustomed to coming to him for his expertise, they continued to ask for his help rather than someone on his team. He quickly realized, that if he continued to provide support to folks from other departments he would be sending the message to his team that he didn't have confidence in them. So, from the start, he made the decision to refer individuals seeking his help to the appropriate member of his team. The second challenge was realizing there was no longer anyone to tell him how he's doing. Those above him are no longer "supervising" him. They have their own big picture responsibilities and they are only looking to see that his team is delivering, but not necessarily how well he is managing. So often, once you're in management, it's up to you to figure out how you're doing. He also shared a type of an obstacle he has offered to remove for his team. In today's corporate world, teams are often

problem, but what didn't it do? It didn't help them think it through, try out different answers or seek to figure it out themselves. I've also seen managers of technical work jump in and "do" rather than stand beside the person and coach them through it so they experienced doing it. Learning by watching is not the same as learning by doing. Coaching is about helping someone figure out the answer rather than giving them the answer. When they can figure it out themselves, it increases their confidence. It exercises their muscle for thinking and strategizing to develop good answers. It is better to ask them to offer solutions and then let you give them feedback or ask more questions to help them think through possible results of their proposed solution. It's the old story of giving a man a fish vs. teaching him to fish. Quite frankly, it's easier to just give someone the answer and it's usually faster, but it doesn't help develop the person. To be a more effective manager in growing your direct-reports, you really don't do them a favor by jumping in to solve the problem. Likewise, jumping in to help when workloads get heavy, can also produce negative results. If you jump in to help cover the workload, then you may be diminishing your own value to those above you. They may continue to see you as the individual contributor rather than the manager. It can work against your chances of getting budget increases for more staff if you're doing the work, and when you jump in to do work that is not part of your management role, you are removing yourself from the work of the bigger picture.

As a manager, your role is to stay focused on the big picture. That means you need to be sure your team is continuing to focus on the right things, is staying on target for deadlines and deliverables, and is functioning properly as a team within your own department and in supporting other departments. It also means you are checking in with folks regularly to be sure they are on target to meet deadlines and accomplish that for which they are responsible, that you are finding out what challenges you may need to help with, what obstacles may need your

short on team members for the amount of work, which means getting strategic about prioritizing and also having to say no to some requests from other departments. He has offered to be the "bad guy" in telling other department heads their request isn't going to be dealt with. I asked if his team members frequently take him up on that offer. Surprisingly he said they are not. What that tells me is that knowing he will do that, is simply the back-up and confidence they need to say that themselves to other departments.

If you are a manager with some experience, seek out newer managers to be a mentor and to help them in figuring out how they're doing and offer support. Middle management can be lonely, so be your own support system. Help each other to become great managers before you get to the top - because it's even lonelier up there!

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authority or political clout to remove for them and that folks are working well together. When any one of these things isn't working well, then it's also your responsibility to have the difficult conversations and take appropriate action to turn things around.

Management is tough, but it is rewarding and worth the investment of your time and energy to serve the organization at a new level.

If you're struggling with or challenged by any of the issues I've addressed, reach out to me and let's talk. I can help you.

Keep seeing the big-picture,



Click below to schedule time with me.



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