

So You Want to Be a Manager?

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A recent [Harvard Business Review](#) article cited a [CareerBuilder](#) survey polling a nationwide sample of 3,625 full-time workers from various sized government and private sector industries and across many salary levels. In the survey, CareerBuilder asked about leadership aspirations and found that “many workers don’t want their boss’s job for reasons ranging from generational differences to happiness with their current position to concerns about additional responsibility and work-life balance.” Some experiential insight might assist employees who are thinking of transitioning from the role of employee to the role of manager. Employees who wish to lead may initially be excited about having the authority to manage a task to completion. But this thinking neglects that a manager’s job is to manage people, as well to oversee task completion. Think about it - can you manage a task without managing the people who do the work? To accomplish both, a manager must establish effective interpersonal relationships with his or her followers and provide leadership for efficient job execution. During a manager’s first year on-the-job, several discoveries occur. The first is that a manager is a problem solver. By listening to employees, a manager can determine what barriers to the work exist, and then implement solutions to dismantle those barriers. This allows employees to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively. The second discovery is that a manager is a decision-maker. By gathering and analyzing data, a manager can render an evidence-based decision supported by the best information available

at the time. Managers that delay or avoid decisions, or that are indecisive because of analysis by paralysis, lose the respect of their followers. Understanding that few decisions are irrevocable, and many decisions can be improved upon with midcourse corrections, can help a manager to embrace decision-making. After a manager has been on-the-job for a year or so, he or she learns that a manager is not a doer, i.e. the one that does the work. Instead, the manager empowers others to do the work by clarifying responsibilities, granting the power to take action, and confirming accountability. At this point, [open communication](#), empathy, active listening, and positive reinforcement are among the ingredients for managerial success—ingredients that develop both people and bench strength. Whereas mistakes will be made in the quest for innovation and creativity, a manager should acknowledge them without passing blame, learn from them, and move on. As few final tips are as follows: If you desire to be a manager, you must be able to adapt to an ever-changing work environment and maintain a focus on continuously improving processes through people engagement. Change is stressful and so, too, is managing. Thus, new managers should have a plan to control stress--whether through work/life balance, exercise, diet, or meditation--stress management is key to a long-term career in management. Over fifty-five years ago the great management scholar and guru Dr. Warren Bennis stated, “So it’s no wonder there are more people who dislike being in charge than people who like it.” One can’t help but wonder if Bennis would agree if the suggestions above might provide future managers with a modicum of delight in being in charge?

About the Author



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