



Stepping Up to Supervision

With post economic crisis pressures here to stay for the time being, organisations in 2011 will need employees at all levels who can work independently. Roy Magee, Regional Vice-President, AchieveGlobal, Asia offers three hallmarks of success for first time manager's to flourish in today's tough working environment.

The step up to manager has always been a big one. The current workforce is a daunting place for employees, especially young employees. They have already spent much of their fledgling careers navigating one of the worst global economic crises in history and, in doing so, been forced to learn the value of being nimble, adaptable and committed – the hard way. But while the new generation may be flexible and accustomed to change, a new challenge is fast approaching. Stepping up to supervision.

Taking on new assignments, learning how to delegate, shifting from being a buddy to being a boss – any one of these transitions is a handful. However, with nearly a third (28 percent) of the workforce in Singapore over the age of 50¹, a wave of impending retirements, and a restricted ability to hire new employees, it is a challenge many Gen Y employees are likely to experience in the next couple of years.

In fact, changes in the workplace, specifically the recession's mantra of "do more with less," have already thrust some new managers in Singapore into pivotal roles without lengthy on-boarding periods and for many it's been too much to handle. This may be why according to AchieveGlobal's consultants, who work extensively with leading Singapore-based firms, more and more employees in the country are turning down promotions to managerial positions. For these people, the difficulty of the job outweighs any excitement or pride they might feel in getting promoted.



Challenging new realities for managers

The realities of today's business environment have raised the stakes considerably, cut down on the margin for error, and made the job of managing people much more challenging.

Three core challenges manager newbies currently face:

- A diverse and increasingly frustrated workforce
- Constantly changing job duties
- Increasing demands from their firm

In moving into their new role, new managers also face the additional challenge of becoming accustomed to their business's new expectations of them. With post crisis pressures on their shoulders, effective delegation and quality control are by no means enough. Managers must also motivate others, adapt to new and challenging situations (and help others do the same), understand the company's goals to determine work priorities, establish a productive relationship with C-level executives and adhere to processes. So how can Gen Y prepare for the overwhelming realities and challenges of rising to management?

Hallmarks critical to stepping up to supervision

Our research, combined with our years of experience helping organisations to develop productive workforces, has identified three hallmarks most critical to first-time managers. First-time managers must work to incorporate these hallmarks into their efforts as they guide the work of others:

These will give first-time managers the traction they need to hit the ground running without losing their balance. As they gain experience, they will encounter situations requiring new skills—coaching, resolving disputes, correcting performance, and conducting performance evaluations—but the three hallmarks will remain central to their success. As long as change continues as a dominant theme, managers will need to rely on the three hallmarks of success.



Hallmark 1: Building personal credibility

Organisations have become less hierarchical, which has led to positional authority being less of a hallmark of leadership than personal credibility. Personal credibility, however, is neither an attitude nor quality. It's a perception others form of you, based on their assessment of your actions over time. Once an employee steps up to management, everything they do and say will be carefully noted by members of the workgroup and others in the organisation.

To earn respect, new managers must show respect – a daily effort that builds trust and supports long-term collective efforts. When managers admit that they don't know everything, leverage the experience of their team, give others credit when it's due, follow through on their commitments, and work hard to remove obstacles for their work group, their credibility will thrive. These attributes are as valuable as industry skills. They are therefore a deal breaker in successful management.

Hallmark 2: Activating team commitment

The dawn of the new business realities, our increasingly competitive business environment and lingering financial pressures from the global economic crisis mean organisations cannot succeed simply by maintaining business as usual. Creativity and extra effort are required on the part of every employee from the CEO all the way down. Successful managers know how to activate their employees' energy and dedication.

An effective new manager inspires and focuses energy and creativity by setting goals that team members see as worthwhile, by showing the team how their work fits into the bigger picture, and by establishing and responding to clear performance objectives. Effective new managers not only delegate simple tasks but include employees in idea-generating and decision-making – letting them feel a sense of ownership of the collective work. Fully committed employees will use their own ingenuity and dedication to “go the extra mile” to reach organisational goals. The manager, can therefore spend less time giving directions and making sure everyone is doing their job, and more time on higher priorities.



Hallmark 3: Engaging senior management support

It's natural for novice managers to focus on their teams. Successful supervisors, however, know that without a solid relationship with their managers, they can't count on the support they need to achieve results. Managing upward is therefore vital to supervisory success – not just pleasing the boss, but establishing an alliance between partners.

New supervisors can achieve this bond by ensuring that they understand what's important to their managers and actively supporting it. They should also – wherever possible – make a concerted effort to go to their managers with solutions, not just problems, and proactively keep their manager up-to-date on any current or potential issues. Whether in person, on the phone or via e-mail, maintaining ongoing dialogue with senior management is critical.

References

¹ [Ministry of Manpower, November 2010](#)