

Common Attributes of Good Managers

White Paper



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We routinely study managers and supervisors seeking answers as to why certain managers are successful and others seem to fail. It is somewhat difficult to find a truly good manager. But it really is not all that difficult to identify the attributes that separate good managers from average or bad ones.

Contrary to what some business owners and executives believe, a significant problem in any business is identifying, hiring, and keeping qualified and effective management personnel. Bear in mind that people are the key factor in the success of any business. And it all starts with the management team. There seems to be such a dearth of good managers that organizations tend to accept mediocrity as a way of life rather than deal with the difficult issues of turning bad managers out. Bad managers can have a very detrimental impact on an organization.

Very often, managers are not good mentors and coaches and there hasn't been enough time spent in trying to mold them into effective managers. And in many cases, no matter how much "molding" takes place, the inherent personality traits won't allow enough sustained change to take place.

But when it is time to identify someone for a management position, it helps immensely to look for certain attributes that tend to be found in good managers. The following list is probably not a complete one, but it seems to form a good foundation in terms of identifying what attributes are common among good managers:

- They care.
- They have a good sense of humor.
- They have strong people skills.
- They possess strong communication skills, both verbal and written.
- They have a sense of fairness in dealing with people and issues.
- They exhibit consistency in behavior.
- They are able to control emotions and keep them out of decision making and interactions with others.
- They believe that employees are more important to his/her and the company's success than he/she is.
- They are honest.
- They are willing to seek input from employees and build consensus.
- They are open minded.

- They are flexible.
- They have well controlled egos.
- They are self-confident and secure.
- They are good listeners.
- They possess the ability to be direct when needed without being abusive or offensive.
- They have a sincere interest in people and their well being.
- They have good perceptive/intuitive abilities.
- They possess a good understanding of what makes people tick.
- They are mature.
- They allow others to get credit for positive outcomes and they want their people to succeed.
- They understand that hiring good people is critical to their success and they do not micromanage.
- They are willing to admit to their own shortcomings and mistakes and do not feel a persistent need to be right.
- They are effective at instilling accountability and responsibility for results.
- They have the ability to think strategically and focus on both the short and long-term.
- They work hard.
- They understand the need to achieve results and remain focused on them.

How do you and other managers/supervisors working in your organization stack up against each of these attributes? Using a five point scale with 1 being little of a particular attribute and 5 being a lot, rate yourself against this list. If you feel comfortable doing so, have others do the same and then compare your perception of your attributes to the perceptions of co-workers and subordinates. You might be surprised at what you discover.

Keep in mind that all of us bring certain personality traits and associated behaviors to the workplace. The two keys to becoming an excellent manager are: (1) being self aware and (2) understanding that changes in behavior are likely necessary. Those who can achieve self awareness and appropriate behavioral modifications that coincide with the list above will typically achieve the highest levels of success as managers.

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6165 NW 86th St.
Johnston, IA 50131

P (800) 516-5849

F (888) 292-8812

reviewsnap.com