

SHARPEN YOUR MANAGEMENT FOCUS

9 MINUTE IDEAS TO BOOST YOUR MANAGEMENT FOCUS

Each idea will take no more than 9 minutes to read, digest and plan for action. Do 1 a week with energy and focus and see what a difference you can make in just 90 days.

Don't get stuck get started!

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That's all it takes. Can you think of anything better you could be doing at work in 9 minutes? 9 minutes to get strong, focused and connected.

TOP TIPS FOR MAXIMISING THE VALUE OF THIS PACK

MAKE THE DECISION WITH CONVICTION

If you decide to apply these 12 ideas over the next 90 days then make sure you plan how you will maintain your motivation. Good intentions can fall by the wayside without real commitment.

So, what works for you? E.g. Planning time each week? Working in a group or with a friend?

Think about the times you have seen something through from start to finish and use whatever strategy worked for you then.

IT IS LESS ABOUT TIME AND MORE ABOUT FOCUS

Most weeks you'll just need 9 minutes to read each idea and gather some thoughts. The actions can take place as you go about your daily work. So decide when you'll read each idea and then the rest should follow during the week.

A LITTLE LESS CONVERSATION... A LITTLE MORE ACTION

We all do a lot of thinking each day but how much of it really results in action?

Well you are much more likely to act on a thought if you write it down.

So take this opportunity to get yourself a notebook to record your thoughts and planned actions. Then you can easily reference it as you go. Keep this notebook specifically to support you so all your notes are together and uninterrupted.

When we work with managers, many know what they should be doing but for all sorts of reasons they just don't get round to taking action - **don't let that be you!**

WELL, THAT IS IT. YOU ARE ALL SET TO GO.

**JUST THROW IN A BIT
OF CURIOSITY AND A HANDFUL OF
DETERMINATION AND WE KNOW YOU WILL SHINE.**

1 THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

INTRODUCTION

To start improving your focus and effectiveness as a manager then you need to start at the very beginning... and the beginning is YOU!

Read the story opposite and then the action ideas in the next page which are all based around the moral of the story.

Do them all if you can or pick the one that will make the biggest difference to you right now.

A captain of industry was looking for an able and wise manager who have the skills and audacity to take over the running of the organisation after he had retired. He assembled the best managers from his own company and hired recruitment consultants and headhunters to find him additional ones who might serve his purpose.

On a particular day, all the possible contenders were assembled in a great hall of a mighty palace, which the organisation had hired for the day. The captain of industry addressed the assembled hand picked managers.

"I have a problem, and I want to know who among you has the wherewithal to solve it. What you see in the wall behind me is the biggest, mightiest, and heaviest door in the kingdom. Who among you, without assistance, has the power to open it?"

Some of the managers simply shook their heads. It was just too big a problem. Others examined the door more closely, discussed aspects of leverage and mass, remembered theories of problem solving they had learned in business school, and admitted that it seemed to be an impossible task. When the wisest and most respected had accepted defeat, all the others capitulated too.

Only one manager approached the door and gave it a thorough close up examination. He tapped it, assessed its width and depth, noticed the nature and lubrication of its hinges. He checked it thoroughly with his eyes and hands. Prodding here, pushing here, poking there. Finally he made his decision. He breathed deeply, centred himself, and pulled gently on the door. It swung open effortlessly.

The others had made the assumption that the door had been locked or jammed. In fact it had been left ever so slightly ajar and the carpentry and design were so excellent only the slightest touch was required to open it.

The captain of industry had his successor. He addressed the managers assembled there.

Success in life and industry depends on certain key things. They are these we have just seen demonstrated.

1. Rely on your senses to fully understand the reality of what is going on around you.
2. Do not make false assumptions.
3. Be willing to make tough decisions.
4. Have the courage to act with boldness and conviction.
5. Put your powers into action. Finally, do not be afraid to make mistakes.

ACTION IDEAS

1. Rely on your senses

How often each day do you stop being busy to just listen, absorb, feel and see what's happening in your team. Try it! Every day this week spend 5 minutes doing nothing but 'being' and **jot down what you notice**.

2. Don't make false assumptions

Ask questions instead. What assumptions are you making at the moment about your team, your manager, the priorities for the business in the next 6 months?

Write down three questions that could provide you with new information - and ask them this week.

3. Take tough decisions

You've done it before - so what did you learn?

Take a deep breath and write in the centre of the page a tough decision you have made at work (perhaps not the hardest - so let's say if level 1 decision was 'What should I have for lunch' and a level 10 was 'I sacked my whole team' then choose around a 7'.

Now just write for 90 seconds - your thoughts, feelings, the outcome...Anything. Now breathe again!

Look at the page and write at the bottom one thing you have learned.

Apply that this week to a tough decision you are avoiding! Or if you really are on top of things then you know you'll be prepared.

4 and 5 Boldness, conviction and action

We reckon if you do the first three you will be way up there in the conviction stakes. So just get into the habit of asking yourself 'What's stopping me? What's the worst that could happen?'

And calm that fear of making mistakes!

**“He who is not courageous enough
to take risks will accomplish
nothing in life.”**

-Muhammad Ali



2 SIMPLYMYROLE

INTRODUCTION

What do you say when someone asks you what you do? Does it sound something like ...'I work in a bank...call centre...shop'? Or 'I'm a Business Development Manager... IT consultant...in HR'?

Sometimes job titles don't convey the essence of your work. This is an opportunity to think about what you really do.

DEFINING YOUR PURPOSE

Many people focus on the tasks they perform rather than their real purpose e.g. a locksmith installs locks but their real purpose is to protect people from criminals and make them feel safe.

Simply asking "Why" will help you to arrive at your real purpose.

This can help you to really connect with your role and can help you to focus on the **difference you make** - to your colleagues, your customers or to the world around you.

Having connected to the bigger purpose you can refine this so you can state this as your purpose within the organisation - the reason you're employed. E.g. the locksmith is employed to protect people while maximising company profitability or if you are a Project Manager, it could be something like:

As a project manager it is my responsibility to ensure that all key stakeholders are driving towards the same goal ensuring the values of the company are upheld in order to achieve the project on time and in budget.

Knowing your real purpose can support you in many ways from helping you plan your time (you want to be doing things that help you achieve your purpose rather than things that don't) to getting the most out of your working relationships. If you can't explain what you do and why you do it then how can you expect and get support from others?

Remember simplifying ideas for effective communication is no easy thing. We all think because we understand something in our own heads, it will be clear to those around us. Getting something to happen in any kind of organisation is hard. If you can't explain the subject and get support it's impossible to make progress. And that is why taking time to define and simplify your role is critical to your success.

So jot down your purpose in the box below:



IF YOU ARE A MORE VISUAL PERSON, YOU MAY FIND VALUE IN HAVING GOAL BOARDS.

This is a collage of pictures that represent the role and the type of person you want to be in that role. If this is you then simply cut out slogans and pictures from magazines and papers and stick on a piece of paper – photocopy it and laminate and stick in your diary or blue-tac above your desk so you can be reminded of the difference you want to make.

COMMUNICATE AND ASK FOR HELP!

No-one can operate alone.

Decide who you need to communicate this message to quickly and do so. Think about whether you need to adjust your communication depending on your audience but be clear and focused and remember to ask for the help you need in order to be the best you can be in your role.

**WHO DO YOU NEED TO SHARE YOUR
MESSAGE WITH AND HOW?**

HOW CAN THEY SUPPORT YOU?

3 YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

INTRODUCTION

This activity will help you to develop wider relationships around the organisation so that you can ensure you have the support to meet your targets.

NETWORK KEY



The person has influence in the organisation.



The person is a key stakeholder for you.



The person is an important source of information.



The person/group has relationships to help you achieve your goals.



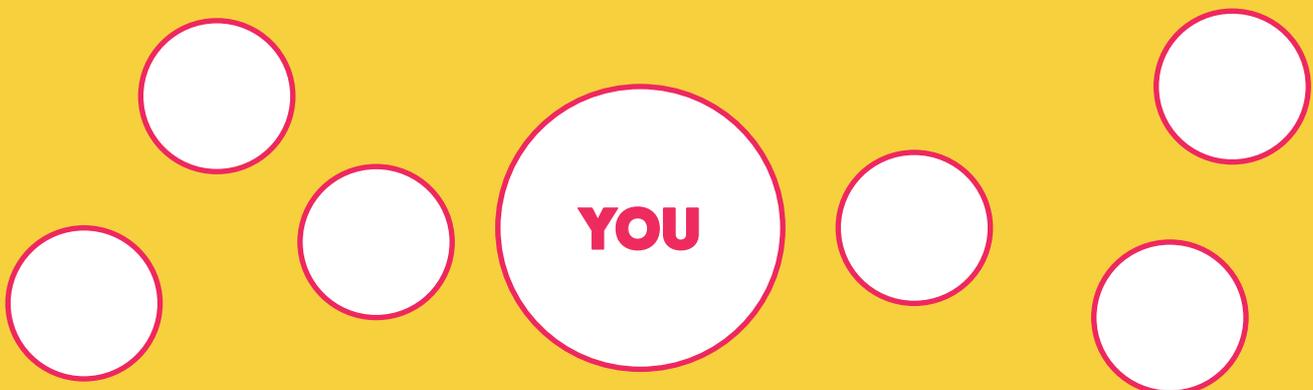
If the person/group has special expertise to help you achieve your goals.

ACTION

1. List up to five individuals or departments within the company with whom you would benefit from deepening your relationship.

2. Now list five individuals or departments within the company with whom you have a great relationship.

3. Now on the following page draw a diagram, like the one shown below to visually demonstrate the strength of relationship you have with these people. The closer they are to you, the stronger the relationship.



4. Then, using the key opposite add symbols to these people to you work out how significant this relationship needs to be to help you be the success you want to be over the next 100 days.

Using what you have learned from the diagram and the questions below, work out a plan for enhancing your network. **Jot down your notes on this page.**

Note:

If there is not an existing relationship between you and a member of your desired network, identify how you might use your existing network to connect to the other person.

Decide whether, given the benefits identified, the current intensity of the relationship gives you what you need. If not, develop a plan for how you might build a stronger relationship.

Think about the following questions:

What barriers might hinder developing a stronger relationship?

Are there mutual colleagues who could help you develop a stronger relationship?



ESSENTIAL BEHAVIOURS OF TODAY'S SUCCESSFUL MANAGERS

1. Be prepared to review your daily experiences

And know you can always learn from them.

2. Ask your team what they want from you and be prepared to apply it (where possible)

Remember don't dismiss an idea out of hand, most things are possible if you are prepared to think creatively.

3. Develop resilience and confidence

If at first you don't succeed, then try again.

4. Ask questions and be prepared to listen carefully to the answers.

You can never have all the answers and the ability to be open and question will help your decision making.

5. Give people your full attention

You will earn their respect as well as often learn really useful information.

6. Focus on people's strengths not weaknesses.

People perform best in environments of high expectations and positive feedback rather than being told what they have done wrong.

7. In the first 100 days, focus time and effort on building new relationships

Seek out the good in them rather than being critical and you will soon build a reputation based on respect and trust.

8. Always know where you are against your plans.

Monitor performance and encourage others to monitor their own performance – this focus means that you will achieve more.

9. Resist the temptation to complain and blame.

If something isn't right see what you can do to fix it– think solutions not problems.

10. Deal positively with criticism.

Ask for specifics to help clarify what you need to do to put the problem right.

4 RED OR BLACK?

INTRODUCTION

In a recent article in Utne magazine, Dr. Dan Beskind writes

"...our age views multi- tasking as the normal way of getting things done. If we're not juggling a dozen different commitments at once, we tend to think there's something wrong."

But from a medical viewpoint, the opposite is true. He points out, "chronic stress has been shown to weaken our immune system, strain the heart, damage memory cells in the brain, and cause the insulin resistance that leads to type 2 diabetes. It has been implicated in cancer, depression, and even rheumatoid arthritis."

This activity will help you to consider alternative working methods to help boost your productivity.

ACTION

Use this table as your guide:

CREDITS
Dynamic Vision, generosity Courage, boldness, persistence, integrity Well connected both internally & externally Skilled Capable Confident Time management Action orientation

DEBITS
Anger, small-mindedness Perfectionism, pettiness Fear, anxiety, hesitancy Bad reputation Laziness Poor organizational skills Reluctance to act Analysis paralysis Blame

Would you be in the red or in the black?

Review your team using the approach above.....then decide the three priority areas on which you need to focus. How will you go about this to improve your team balance sheet?

Jot your thoughts down below.



5 TOOLKIT FOR CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

Continued success comes from the ability to constantly change and adapt as the environment we work in changes.

Being able to deal with complexity and ambiguity is critical for your success as a manager.

activity will encourage you to think about the qualities and skills a good change manager needs.

ACTION

So what are the essential tools/skill-set required to be effective at driving change?

Below is a list of seven commonly identified essential tools for successful change activists.

1. Clarity of objective:

The ability to think of the wider context, make and act on decisions, with clear thinking and confidence.

2. Motivation and motivational leadership:

The ability to get started and keep going even when things get tough and the ability to energise your team to deliver and persist.

3. Trust and care (Emotional Intelligence):

People want to work with you because they trust and respect you even when you have to make unpopular decisions.

4. Inclusive ways of working:

Respect for all and giving time and space for everyone to make a difference.

5. Communication:

Being motivational communicators and great listeners. Keeping everyone informed and up to date.

6. Sense of self-esteem:

Being clear about where you are going and how you make your difference. Being centred and happy in yourself.

7. Physical stamina:

The ability to keep going in times of uncertainty and to display drive during that uncertainty.

3 TO THRIVE [DAILY HABITS TO BUILD]

1

2

3

3 ACTIONS TO BE SCHEDULED THAT WILL HELP ME WORK ON PURPOSE AND PROGRESS MY GOALS

1

2

3

6 MONO TASKING AND OUTCOME FOCUS

INTRODUCTION

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But from a medical viewpoint, the opposite is true. He points out:

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ACTION 1: MONO TASKING

If you're on the multi-tasking treadmill, try mono-tasking.

Decide what is the most important thing for you to do right now. Write it on an index card, and also jot down the amount of time you can realistically give it now.

Then start on that task. If anybody interrupts, tell them you'll get back to them in X minutes (whenever you are scheduled to finish this task). If your mind wanders, glance at the index card to remind yourself of what you are focusing on now, and do that one thing.

Try this for at least one day and notice the difference in how you feel.

ACTION 2: OUTCOME FOCUS

If you have a to-do list, you may find that there are certain items that keep getting transferred from one day's list to the next. Not surprisingly, these are the ones that are the least enjoyable tasks and they may not seem that urgent. But, the longer we delay them, the more weight they take on and the harder it gets to tackle them.

A useful approach is to re-frame the task as an outcome. For example, if the task is "hold a team meeting," the outcome could be "focus and motivate the team". It's a small difference in wording, but the outcome focus changes the content of the task.

If there's an item you've been carrying over on your to-do list (whether that list is on paper or in your head), rewrite it as an outcome. Keep that outcome in front of you as you do the task, and notice the difference in your energy level.

Try these ideas and **jot down notes of the difference they made here.**



TIME MANAGEMENT STYLES

The key to time management is knowing ourselves, as we can't actually 'manage' time; all we can manage is our own behaviour.

For many of us this is more than enough of an activity. While we claim that effective time management is a top priority and that we just have to get more organised, our actions don't match our stated desires. Under pressure we tend to revert to extreme behaviour – which one might just be you?

THE CRISIS MANAGER

For you, every event is a crisis. You're so busy putting out fires that you have no time to deal with anything else – especially the boring, mundane things such as time management. Tasks pile up around you while you rush from fire to fire all day.

THE OVER - COMMITTER

Your problem is you can't say 'No'. All anyone has to do is ask, and you'll chair another committee, take on another project, or organise yet another community event. You're so busy you don't even have time to write down all the things you do!

THE RELAXER

There is such a thing as being too 'laid-back' – especially when it starts interfering with your ability to finish tasks or bother to return phone calls. Getting to things when you get to them isn't time management; it's simple task avoidance.

THE CHATTY ONE

Born to socialise, you have astounding oral communication skills and can't resist exercising them at every opportunity. Every interaction becomes a long drawn out conversation – especially if there's an unpleasant task dawning that you'd like to put off.

THE PERFECTIONIST

You have a compulsion to cross all the 't's' and dot all the 'i's', preferably with elaborate whorls and curlicues. Exactitude is your watchword, and you feel that no rushed job can be a good job. Finishing tasks to your satisfaction is such a problem you need more time zones, not just more time.

Hopefully, none of these personality profiles is a photograph of you! But perhaps these descriptions will provoke some thought about the different ways you manage or mismanage time, and some clues about how you might change your behaviours to make your time management efforts more successful.

7 WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

INTRODUCTION

We recently asked various people at different stages of their careers what they thought would make a great manager. Bearing in mind that these people are from many walks of life, take a look at what they said and notice what you notice?

"A great manager should not be a 'do as I say and not as I do' type but should be one who practices what (s)he preaches. Staff usually take their cue from the boss and if they see their boss is lazy, weak or indecisive – then they'll be the same. If they see that the boss is resolute and hard working then they'll be the same too."

"Managers should be able to take positives out of negative situations."

"A great manager does what they believe is the right thing and takes people with them."

"A great manager should lead by example."

"A fantastic manager is someone who listens rather than hears and acts upon the needs not wants of the team"

"A manager is a person who has the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do, and like it."

"Managers should be able to take positives out of negative situations."

"I cannot say what a manager must do, but I can tell you what I think a manager must be. He or she must be confident in his or her own ability, not over ambitious, to be kind, reliable, be likeable but not a pushover, be loyal."

"Great managers exemplify honesty to do what they want without undermining others, they affirm shared values, they develop capacity within their business through their people, they have the courage of their convictions and they allow people to be. They have balance and encourage balance within their organisation. They have fun."

"A good manager is one whose path you choose to follow."

ACTION

WHAT ARE 3 ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE, STARTING TODAY, THAT WOULD IMPROVE YOUR MANAGEMENT SKILL BASED ON WHAT PEOPLE WANT?

1

2

3

WHEN GIVING FEEDBACK

1. Seek opportunities to provide feedback to teams and individuals on their performance:

Feedback helps people to understand if they are doing a good job or if there are areas in which they can improve. Feedback can be given formally or informally, orally or in writing.

2. Choose an appropriate time and place to give the feedback

Feedback is most useful and relevant if provided quickly. Sometimes it is appropriate to give feedback publicly (When it's an opportunity to celebrate), but often a quiet word is what is required.

3. Recognise good performance and achievement

Take opportunities to congratulate individuals on their successes.

4. Provide constructive suggestions and encouragement for improving future performance

When individuals are not performing well, tell them and advise them how they can improve.

5. Encourage individuals to contribute to their own assessment

Ask open-ended questions about how they view their performance and invite them to be specific.

6. Provide feedback in sufficient detail, in a manner and at a level and pace which is appropriate to the individual concerned

Some individuals may readily understand your feedback on their performance. For others it may be necessary to be very specific about their performance and any improvement required.

7. Encourage individuals to seek clarification

Check their understanding and give them the opportunity to ask questions.

8. Encourage individuals to make suggestions on how systems/procedures could be improved

Their performance may be greatly enhanced by changes to procedures and working practices.

9. Record details of any action agreed

Make a note of actions agreed to maintain or improve their performance or change procedures and inform the appropriate people.

10. Review performance

Check back at an appropriate point to see whether performance has improved or been maintained.

HOW?

Concentrate on performance and behaviours not personality

Only give feedback on things that can be changed

Regard criticism as a form of learning not punishment

Own your feedback – use 'I' statements be specific about the behaviour what you want to stop or change

Ask questions to enable the individual to see the effects of his/her actions

Encourage the individual to think of alternative approaches by asking "how else could you have approached that?" or "what other options are there?"

Remind yourself that it is not the person you are criticising but his/her performance

Do it in confidence and at an appropriate time

Do not leave it to fester.

8 THE ART OF QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

There are many traditional questions that we are used to asking at work, things like:

What have we tried before?

How much will it cost?

How did that work?

What might work in this situation?

What happened?

These are the types of questions you hear all the time, but how much do they help you progress?

This style of questioning keeps the questioner in control and simply reinforces his/her current thinking. They are factual questions that work within the current context. If you want to seek out new or difference ways of working, you need to ask questions that help jump off the current loop of thinking.

Try some of these:

QUESTIONS TO CHANGE PERSPECTIVE

“What would Obama/ Redgrave/ Mandela/ your mum do?” Encouraging others to think about someone they respect and how that person might handle the situation

QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP A FRAMEWORK FOR A SOLUTION

Encouraging others to consider what success would be like “Who needs to be happy with the result?” “It’s now 6 months in the future and we found the solution. What would that success look/feel/sound like?” “What are the critical concerns that we’d need to address to ensure a positive outcome?”

QUESTIONS TO CHECK IN ON RESOURCES

Resources are one of the key inhibitors. People feel automatically that they don’t have enough resources so they do nothing. Try asking “If we could adjust the tasks people do to make room for this, what would need to change?” “How would you solve this challenge without any additional money, time or people?” “If you knew the answer, what would you say?”

QUESTIONS TO CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS

Make a list of all the things you ‘know’ about the current situation. Then play devil’s advocate “How do you know that can’t be changed?” “What rules would need to be broken to make a change to this?” “What would be the worst that can happen?” Now this doesn’t mean you can break all the rules - some of them can’t be broken, but by challenging some of your assumptions, you will be able to drive deeper thinking that will help you find the answer.

These questions are great for development of individuals or strategic decision making. We often don’t use them because we are conditioned to apply factual questions and factual answers. It will take new discipline and new habits but we urge you to take this list and try them next time you have a significant challenge to solve and notice the difference. The key to driving progress is to ask a different set of questions. Try some of these in your next management meeting and see what differences in responses you get.

ACTION

Identify one team project that you would like to initiate in the next month and try out some of these questions with your team to see what fresh thinking they produce.

Jot down some of the great questions you tried on the next page.

MY GREATEST QUESTIONS



9 BECAUSE THEY WANT TO

INTRODUCTION

Everyone instinctively knows that igniting the full potential of people is the right thing to do. People will only ever do anything to the best of their ability for one reason, and one alone - because they want to – there is no other reason.

This activity will help you to consider what you can do to improve your team performance by at least 10%.

ACTION

Take a look at the snail's story and then answer the questions below:

"Once upon a time a snail was lying on its side in a hospital bed. Along came the doctor, who was a badger. The badger said, 'You don't look at all well. What happened to you?'

The snail, rather woefully, relayed his story.

'It all began' he said 'when I was trying to cross a road. I remembered that I should look left and right and did so for two hours. During that time the coast was clear, so I set off. No sooner had I got on to the road when, out of nowhere, moving at tremendous speed comes this tortoise - and runs me over'

Our own perception may be that a tortoise is slow - but maybe that's not the case from the snail's-eye view!"

PERCEPTION IS REALITY IN THE EYES OF THE PERCEIVER

So now is the time to test out your assumptions about what motivates and what frustrates those around you.

Take 3 people in your team – a top performer, an average performer and a weaker performer.

Chat to them informally.

See just how much you can find out about them over the next 3 days. As you do this, observe changes in their behaviour.

After 3 days take time out to reflect on what you have learnt and answer the following questions for all of them.

Jot some notes on the next page.

THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What are the 3 things that motivate them most?

What's important in their lives?

What types of things do they find difficult to deal with?

How can I use this knowledge to help them at work?

WHEN SETTING WORK

Allocate work according to available resources and skills of individual

Optimise the resources and the skills of individuals.

Clearly define individual's responsibilities and limits of authority

Make sure individuals understand their own responsibilities and limits of authority, and those with whom they work closely, in order to avoid possible conflict, duplication or omission of important responsibilities.

Provide learning and development opportunities for individuals within the allocated work

Take opportunities to develop new skills which individuals will need in the future.

Brief individuals on their work in a manner and at a level and pace which is appropriate

Inexperienced or less confident people may need a more detailed briefing on their responsibilities and work than their more experienced and self – assured colleagues.

Encourage people to seek clarification

Check on their understanding and give them opportunities to ask questions.

Provide access to people who can help them meet their objectives

People may need access to colleagues, managers, specialists and external advisers to help them meet their work and development objectives.

Provide the right level of support

Some individuals will require much closer day to day guidance and monitoring than others.

Ensure all work allocations are realistic

Carefully calculate the time, cost and criticality of the work to ensure appropriate resources have been allocated.

Reallocate work where appropriate

If the way work was allocated proves to be unrealistic, or organisational demands change, reallocate work whilst minimising and detrimental impact on time, cost or personal development.

Benefit from your experience

Evaluate how well you have allocated work in order to improve your performance in the future.

MY NOTES AND ACTIONS



10 AVOIDING THE PITFALLS OF LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

Work is often so busy we rarely have time to sit back and think about our own performance. But how can you ensure you are still on track?

This reflection exercise will help you to consider your own leadership styles and ask you to look at how you can avoid the 5 most common pitfalls of leadership.

ACTION

So what are some of the biggest obstacles to becoming an effective leader?

1. Mistaking position for power

Good leaders accept that they work for their people. Focusing not on their own achievement, but on the success of others.

2. Practising communication and not openness

In the rush to involve others and become a more communicating department, managers will issue briefings, release documents and shower their team with emails – often overkill. Different people need different information; leaders will practice a policy of openness.

3. Providing answers instead of guidance

It is all too easy for a leader to jump in with a size 12 answer....leaders should take time to understand the issue, then ask questions to draw out the best way forward...also remembering to follow-up and give praise!

4. Putting popularity before respect

We all like to be liked, with your team however it can cause major problems...you need to watch your professional objectivity. Leaders earn respect, and do not worry only about being liked.

5. Being visible, but not available

Visibility is key, people are not motivated by your presence alone, you must also be available for them, in their time and on their terms. Reflect on these common leadership pitfalls and consider any actions of your own that can help you consistently avoid them.

Jot down some ideas here.



11 TO DO OR NOT TO DO

INTRODUCTION

As managers we can be so busy trying to please others and get the job done that we lose sight of what's important to us.

This activity will encourage you to take time to reflect on your priorities and get you on track.

ACTION

“We have overstretched our personal boundaries and forgotten that true happiness comes from living an authentic life fuelled with a sense of purpose and balance.”

Dr. Kathleen Hall, from *A Life in Balance*

Reflect on this quote. Then answer the following questions for yourself:

What does this quote mean to you in your work life?

What does this quote mean to you in your personal life?

Are there any similarities/major differences in the way you deal with getting things done in your life?

What can you do to improve the way you prioritise in your life?

Jot down some of your thoughts below.



12 BENCH-MARKING

INTRODUCTION

"Less than 10% of strategies effectively formulated are effectively executed"
Management Today Magazine

"In the majority of failures, we estimate 70%, the real problem isn't strategy...it's bad execution"
"Why CEO's Fail" Fortune Magazine

If these statistics are to be believed, then many initiatives, projects and strategies never deliver their true potential. So why do those that are successful actually work..?

You will have started to get an idea of what you want to change. This activity is about gaining inspiration and ideas from outside your team that can directly help you with these improvements on which you want to work.

ACTION

1. From your own or a colleague's experience identify a person or team that you think are good. Perhaps because they have a good reputation or you have heard about some inspiring work they are doing. It could be someone in the company or another organisation.
2. Make contact with them and tell them you want to find out more. You will be amazed by how willing and open people will be – you simply have to ask. This could be done through a short visit/interview/ phone call/ web searching etc.
3. Then prepare a short session with your team on your findings, drawing out ideas that will support your own activities.
4. Take a look at some external references for ideas and inspiration. **Some great ones are listed below:**

www.forbes.com

www.inc.com

www.hbr.org

13 IMPROVE CREATIVITY

INTRODUCTION

Meetings are one of the greatest devourers of manager's time in many organisations. Some organisations estimate 75% of a manager's time can be spent in meetings, only half of which are judged to be truly productive.

This activity will ask you to think about all the different meetings you are involved with either leading or participating in and will ask you to think of actions you could take to improve meetings that are in your circle of influence.

ACTION

Here are some examples of alternative types of meetings that some companies have experimented with to promote creativity.

Information only meetings

Often used when you need to inform or update groups of people about something. Respects people's time and people can still argue a point informally outside the meeting.

Decision only meetings

Meetings where the only responses allowed are 'yes' and 'no'. People get more interested in the agenda before hand and more discussion happens prior to the meeting.

Stand up meetings

Borrowed from the court of Queen Victoria, stand up meetings cut down time dramatically and means that people know to keep to the point.

Decide at the beginning meetings

People decide either 'yes' or 'no' right at the beginning and then only go back to points that are felt need to be explored further. Again, this approach keeps people focused and in the main people usually feel good about the decisions that have been made.

Rattle and roll meetings

This type of meeting assumes that of 10 items of the agenda only a small number are substantial. Teams rattle through the smaller 8 items at pace and then settle down to focus time proportionately on the bigger issues.

Reflect on these ideas and consider any actions you would like take to improve your team meetings – remember to get the benefits you must get buy-in from your team.

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