



Talk versus Action—Managing

The most effective business-people have the ability to both lead and manage. If planning and communicating are primarily activities of leadership, little happens without management activities that sustain the talk. Management activities include getting the people and resources lined up for each project then and coordinated so that execution can be smooth and timely.

Effective managers also ensure that company systems are in place and set up properly to track and measure progress, challenges and successes. They assess and manage potential risks, and devise ways to avoid problems, such as taking the time to anticipate obstacles and ensure that those obstacles are addressed appropriately. As part of this, they consistently make certain that all company policies, directives and procedures are accommodated in project execution. Paperwork may seem like non-

sense sometimes, but most of it serves a purpose for the organization. This sort of task is simply a routine part of business in the managing phase, and is never allowed to rise to the level of 'issue' when done well. Of course, in addition to the internal paperwork for projects, managing includes the external paperwork. Documentation and enforcement of contracts and agreements for work performed is all part of it.

All of this lays the groundwork for action, creating an environment for success to build and grow.



Effective Use of Overtime

We spend hundreds of hours each year waiting in lines – in traffic, holding for telephone calls, commuting, and so on. But the hours we spend waiting don't have to be wasted hours. They can even be the most productive hours in our days if managed effectively.

Achieve greater productivity from your waiting time by adopting an attitude that the time you spend waiting affords you a valuable opportunity to get some-

thing done you couldn't otherwise do. Carry work with you wherever you go. Use your waiting time to make phone calls, do paperwork, prepare expense reports, write memos and letters, plan your schedule, and read.

The following tips can help you to use your waiting time more effectively:

- If you commute to work on public transportation or car-pool, carry work with you.

Timely Humor

Last night I went to a 24-hour grocery. When I got there, the guy was locking the front door. I said, "Hey, the sign says you're open 24 hours." He goes: "Not in a row!" (Steven Wright)

A guy shows up late for work. The boss yells "You should have been here at 8:30!" he replies: "Why? What happened at 8:30?"

A salesperson dies and goes to Heaven. "There must be some mistake," the salesperson argues. "I'm too young to die. I'm only fifty five." "Fifty five?" says the Gatekeeper. "No, according to our calculations, you're eighty two." "How's you get that?" the salesperson asks. Answers the Gatekeeper: "We added up your time sheets."

Trivia Time

Rainbows can only be seen in the morning or late afternoon. Rainbows are only visible if the sun is 40 degrees or less above the horizon.

The hour and minute hands on a clock cross each other 11 times during a 12-hour period.



- Use a hand-held tape recorder to record your thoughts.
- Get a hands-free cell phone for your vehicle so that you can comfortably converse while driving.
- Always confirm your appointments and meetings to remind clients and colleagues that you will be arriving at a specific time.
- Do not arrive for meetings more than five minutes early.

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Retention Issues



Retaining our best employees has become a growing challenge. Corporate America, of course, has brought this challenge on itself by creating an environment without job security, where promotions from outside the organization have become the norm. New generations of workers enter the workforce with the intention that they will change jobs and careers as opportunities arise. The flip side is that the best people leave for greener pastures, often just as they become truly valuable to the organization. Retaining them is not simple.

Perhaps the single most important link to a corporation is to our direct supervisor. The challenge companies face is that efforts to retain the key employee cannot assume that the direct supervisor is loyal either! This challenge translates layer upon layer in organizations, all the way to the top. Hence, the retention challenge must be addressed at multiple levels and with multiple approaches. Focus on money and benefits has become simply the ante to play the game. It is equally important to place people in challenging growth positions, with freedom for creativity and achievement.

Unfortunately, in an effort to protect the organization from the risks that accompany such freedoms, too many constraints and small thinkers bottle-up top talent.

In speaking with directors and vice presidents that have left corporate America, we often find that they were spending more time with company politics than with real business issues. They simply became fed-up with it all and bolted. It will take multiple touch points to protect our best thinkers from this waste of their time and talents. We all have lots to learn.

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Communication—Making it Better

Excellent communicators understand the subtleties of communication, and this is fundamental to their prowess. Let's think about the communication of the simple request with respect a letter, "Please be sure this goes out today." Surely this is straightforward enough. Yet as stated, a myriad of problems may ensue.

First, let's consider the tone. If stated without much inflection, it is a non-prioritized request that may get lost in the shuffle. If emphasis is given to the word "please", then it may be taken as either sarcastic or as begging. If emphasis is placed on "today", it may come off as impatient and annoyed. If emphasis is put on the word "sure", it may be interpreted as not trusting and even derogatory. Each of these has undesirable side effects.

Second, the structure of this simple request leaves much to be desired. It doesn't specify the means of transmittal, assuming that the receiver knows what is expected, and leaving much room for interpretation (and error). No information regarding the deadline for receipt of the letter is specified, which may ultimately be the source of a major error.

We routinely make simple comments like this all day long, and we're lucky that most of them are received well and we are successful. There are simple changes, however, that can avoid the occasional blunders that ensue from incomplete communications, which is how I would characterize the example above. Consider the following example:

Janice, do you have a minute?
(makes the recipient of the message stop their current activity and focus on what you are about to request)

Carol needs to have this letter, with the original signature on it, in her hands by noon tomorrow so she can proceed to commit funds for our project. Can you make sure that happens? (specific requests, with understanding of 'why'

motivate people to do their part)

Sure Mary, I'll send it out overnight with tracking. (you know that communication has occurred once the feedback has been received - until then, you only know that a message has been sent)

Thanks Janice! I appreciate your handling it personally. It's pretty important, and I want to ensure it happens on time. (clarifies expectations and nicely assigns personal responsibility)

This is simple stuff, and we are routinely doing it all day long. It's easy to skip steps, in the interest of efficiency, and when things go okay, we get in the habit of skipping those steps. With a well-oiled team, we forget that we are even skipping steps. Then, when there's a personnel change, and things go wrong, we blame the new person instead of our short-cut communication.

Be careful to carefully balance the trade-off between time saving efficient communication and the power of effective, complete communication. The latter pays huge dividends, and takes little time to do well.



“Hard work never killed anybody, but why take the chance?”

Edgar Bergen
(1903-1978)