

NONPROFIT *notes*

Building an
environment of excellence

Issue 1, Summer 2002

Principles for Effective Management

“The real job of a manager is to inspire employees to be their best and establish a working environment that allows for them to be their best...Management is an attitude – a way of life.”

— Bob Nelson and Peter
Economy, *Managing for Dummies*

- Are your employees valuable resources? Or are they problems to deal with?
- Do you feel as if there must be more to managing than you thought?
- Does your staff operate as a seamlessly functioning team?
- Is your organization a place where people thrive?

Your answers to these questions say a lot about you, your organization and your view of management. As a manager, whether you are the executive director, a program manager or a supervisor, you set the tone for your organization and shape how people think and act.

Management may be the most written about and most taught aspect of organizations. Yet, for many of us, it remains a bit of mystery. The purpose of this article is to illuminate the nature of being a manager and to explore a simple model for managing.

Nature of Effective Management

We define management as “the art of producing results through others.”¹ This is a simple statement with profound impli-

cations both for managers and those being managed. In our view, the most effective managers focus on the people being managed and ensure that they are set up to be successful. Managing is *people*-oriented, NOT process-oriented. Micro-managing occurs when managers focus on the process, or how the job is getting done, rather than on empowering people.

Effective managers focus on people and their success. They ensure that there is an environment in which both the individual and the organization succeed.

By “environment,” we mean everything that can (and does) affect performance and effectiveness. Our environment includes organizational vision and mission, short term and long term objectives, practices for being effective, tools and methods for producing results, available resources, and training and development. A manager addresses all these factors to empower individuals and teams to produce agreed upon results.

An effective manager, then, focuses on the human factor

Being a Manager

Ultimately, your success as a manager-- inspiring people to be their best -- depends on how you view your staff (or people in general). Do you bring a commitment to empower and to support? Or, do you see people as problems that take up too much time? In other words, how do you respond to that age-old question, "Are people fundamentally good or fundamentally bad?" It's difficult to inspire success if you don't believe your staff is capable, or if you think they can't be trusted, or if they are objects to be manipulated into doing their jobs. The basic question to ask yourself is: Am I committed to my staff succeeding as professionals and growing as individuals? Allow this commitment to guide your actions.

and *manages for results*. This approach allows for several powerful outcomes, including:

- The bigger picture -- fulfilling on objectives, vision and mission -- guides your thinking and your staff's thinking
- People are encouraged to be creative and to contribute
- People are accountable and hold themselves and others to account
- People have an opportunity to grow and develop.

There are at least two additional benefits to managing for results:

- It takes less time and is far more satisfying than managing the process, and
- You don't have to know all the answers!

A Model for Managing

The following principle-based model for managing is consistent with managing for results and empowering people to be accountable. There are four principles in this model:

1. Identify what is important
2. Make what is important manageable and do-able
3. Make choices that are consistent with what is important
4. Invent and adopt practices that support effectiveness.

These four principles keep your focus and your staff's focus on the results you want and pathways to achieving them.

When you know what is important, and in what time frame, you can set priorities and allocate resources intelligently. To define what is important, consider the following:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- What results do you want to produce?
- What difference will those results make?
- How will you know when you have succeeded?

Addressing this principle first generates alignment between you and your staff on the results you are counting on them to deliver.

Once results are identified, the next area to address is **making what is important manageable and do-able**. Here, you ensure that people have the means to succeed. This includes resources, knowledge, training, time, or whatever else is critical to success. Holding people to account and "managing for the result" means first making sure your staff is in fact set up to produce the result.

Questions you can use to address this area include:

- What different ways are there to make this happen?
- How *will* you make that happen?

- What resources are needed to produce this result?
- What are the major milestones?
- What is the time line (and is it practicable)?

Keeping you and your staff focused on the results includes *consciously making choices that are consistent with achieving the results*. This principle emphasizes that producing results means conscious choice and decision-making -- sometimes moment-by-moment! The principle of choice reminds us that we *always have the ability to choose*. Related questions include:

- Are you making choices consistent with your plan and your objectives?
- What other choices might you make?
- What would it take for you to do that?

Underlying this model is the principle of **inventing and working from practices that support effectiveness**. Practices are the keys to the kingdom -- they empower and support you and your staff in fulfilling on the goals and objectives you said are important.

There are two critical points to keep in mind. First, you have the power to *invent* practices. Practices are highly personal. Knowing that you can invent them gives the freedom to design practices that fit *you!* Second, practices, when applied consistently, make it

easy to maintain your focus and to be effective.

Questions that support the invention and use of practices include:

- How will you make sure this turns out? (Look for practices, reminders or ways to support producing the desired result.)
- What new practices could make a difference in your effectiveness?

Our model of management is simple, straightforward and easy to apply in any situation. The model's four principles are useful across the board -- whether dealing with an upset employee or developing a strategic plan.

Conclusion

Putting the emphasis on people leads to deeper relationships and a deeper sense of being on the same team. Both are solid foundations for fulfilling on the vision and mission of your organization. Inspiring people to be their best and providing an environment where that is possible is also the source of profound satisfaction. Moreover, it leads to peace and freedom for you. You don't have to have all the answers and you aren't alone!

Tips for Effectiveness

Components of an Organizational Environment of Excellence

What IS an *effective environment* for organizational excellence? It will include:

Vision -- Everyone finds personal and shared inspiration in the future of the organization.

Clarity -- Everyone participating is clear about the vision and mission of the organization, individual roles and responsibilities, appropriate lines of communication, and what's next.

Alignment -- There is a general alignment about the job to be done and an agreed-upon approach to working together.

Team -- Everyone is FOR everyone else's success, and everyone is clear that no-one wins unless and until everyone wins.

Pathways -- There is a general sense of focus and do-ability.

Practices -- Shared work practices spur productivity and sense of accomplishment.

Space -- There is physical and mental room to get the job done.

Completion -- Everyone does complete work, with clarity about desired outcomes and open communication about work status, needs and next steps.

Questions & Answers

When Everything Is in Disarray, Where Do We Start?

Every project, plan and action begins with a vision. Before you begin anything, envision the outcome you are after. Address such questions as:

- Why is this outcome important? How will it forward your organization's mission?
- What inspires you about this accomplishment?

When clarifying the results that are important, be both specific and thorough. For example, you may intend to produce a successful program AND have your staff thrive. Don't leave out any intended outcomes.

Articulate the qualities and characteristics of the outcome, rather than the process by which you'll achieve it. For example, "establish a foundation for financial viability by designing a funding plan for producing \$x sustainably," will give you a more powerful place to stand than "raise \$100,000 by March 31," even if the latter has its place.

It is impossible to make an intelligent choice among many possible actions without a clear sense of your ultimate destination. Once that destination is established, you will find many appropriate pathways to its achievement.

About This Newsletter

Welcome to our first issue of *Nonprofit Notes*, a newsletter dedicated to supporting an environment of excellence in the nonprofit community. Our purpose is to provide a forum for examining issues related to individual and organizational effectiveness.

We decided to publish this newsletter because we see so many organizations dealing with the same issues, concerns and commitments. In our work, we see an astonishing similarity in issues related to effectiveness, productivity, staff development, teamwork, management growth and all-around job satisfaction.

Our commitment is to provide information, approaches and methodologies that make a difference in your ability to be effective and successful in fulfilling your mission and objectives.

Nonprofit Notes is available through regular mail or on-line at www.effenv.com. Send us your e-mail address if you prefer on-line access. We welcome your questions and comments.

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