

Chapter 1

You're a Manager — Now What?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Figuring out what the heck management is
 - ▶ Moving from being a doer to being a manager of doers
 - ▶ Understanding the changing workforce
 - ▶ Defining the key functions of management
 - ▶ Taking the first steps toward becoming a manager
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Managing is truly a calling — one that, during our long tenures as managers, we authors are proud to have answered. *We're the few. The proud. The managers.* In the world of business, no other place allows you to have such a direct, dramatic, and positive impact on the lives of others and on the ultimate success of your enterprise. This chapter provides an overview of the challenging and ever-changing world of management. Whether you're a manager or a manager-to-be, you can benefit from our inside look into the kinds of management techniques that can help you get the best from your employees every day of the week.

Identifying the Different Styles of Management

One definition describes *management* as “getting things done through others.” Another definition more specifically defines management as “making something planned happen within a specific area through the use of available resources.” Seems simple enough. So why do so many bright, industrious people have trouble managing well? And why do so many companies today seem to offer a flavor-of-the-month training program that changes each time some new management fad blows through the business scene?



Unfortunately, good management is a scarce commodity, both precious and fleeting. Despite years of changing management theory and countless management fads, many workers — and managers, for that matter — have developed a distorted view of management and its practice. Managers often don't know the right approach to take or exactly what to do. And as the saying goes, "If it's foggy in the pulpit, it'll be cloudy in the pew."

Do you ever hear any of the following remarks at your office or place of business?

- ✓ "We don't have the authority to make that decision."
- ✓ "She's in charge of the department — fixing the problem is her responsibility, not ours."
- ✓ "Why do they keep asking us what we think when they never use anything we say?"
- ✓ "I'm sorry, but that's our policy. We're not allowed to make exceptions."
- ✓ "If my manager doesn't care, I don't, either."
- ✓ "It doesn't matter how hard you work; no one's going to notice anyway."
- ✓ "You can't trust those employees — they just want to goof off."



When you hear remarks like these at work, red lights should be flashing before your eyes, and alarm bells should be ringing loudly in your ears. Remarks like these indicate that managers and employees aren't communicating effectively — that managers don't trust their employees, and that employees lack confidence in their managers. If you're lucky, you find out about these kinds of problems while you still have a chance to do something about them. If you're not so lucky and you miss the clues, you may be stuck repeatedly making the same mistakes.

The expectations and commitments that employees carry with them on the job are largely a product of the way their managers treat them. Following are the most commonly adopted styles of management. Do you recognize your management style?

Tough guy (or gal) management



What's the best way to make something planned happen? Everyone seems to have a different answer to this question. Some people see management as something you do *to* people — not *with* them. Does this type of manager sound familiar? "We're going to do it my way. Understand?" Or perhaps the ever-popular threat: "It had better be on my desk by the end of the day — or else!" If worse comes to worst, a manager can unveil the ultimate weapon: "Mess up one more time, and you're out of here!"

This type of management is often known as *Theory X management*, which assumes that people are inherently lazy and need to be driven to perform. Managing by fear and intimidation is always guaranteed to get a response. The question is, do you get the kind of response you really want? When you closely monitor your employees' work, you usually end up with only short-term compliance. In other words, you never get the best from others by lighting a fire under them — you have to find a way to build a fire within them.

Sometimes managers have to take command of the situation. If a proposal has to be shipped out in an hour and your customer just sent you some important changes, take charge of the situation to ensure that the right people are on the task. When you have to act quickly with perhaps not as much discussion as you'd like, however, it's important to apologize in advance and let people know why you're acting the way you are. Remember that the majority of employees leave their positions because of the actions (or lack thereof) of their direct supervisor or manager. So make sure you move quickly but with clear communication and respect for your staff.

Nice guy (or gal) management

At the other end of the spectrum, some people see management as a “nice guy” or “nice gal” kind of idea. *Theory Y management* assumes that people basically want to do a good job. In the extreme interpretation of this theory, managers are supposed to be sensitive to their employees' feelings and avoid disturbing their employees' tranquility and sense of self-worth. This approach may come across like this: “Uh, there's this little problem with your report; none of the numbers are correct. Now, don't take this personally, but we need to consider our alternatives for taking a more careful look at these figures in the future.” This scenario also plays out when someone from the peer group is promoted into a management position. He sometimes can't easily transition from being a buddy into being the manager.

Again, managers may get a response with this approach (or they may choose to do the work themselves!), but are they likely to get the best possible response? No, the employees are likely to take advantage of the managers.

The right kind of management

Good managers realize that they don't have to be tough all the time — and that nice guys and gals often finish first. If your employees are diligently performing their assigned tasks and no business emergency requires your

immediate intervention, you can step back and let them do their jobs. Not only do your employees learn to be responsible, but you also can concentrate your efforts on what is most important to the bottom-line success of your organization.



A manager's real job is to inspire employees to do their best and establish a working environment that allows them to reach their goals. The best managers make every possible effort to remove the organizational obstacles that prevent employees from doing their jobs and to obtain the resources and training that employees need to do their jobs effectively. All other goals — no matter how lofty or pressing — must take a back seat.



Bad systems, bad policies, bad procedures, and poor treatment of others are organizational weaknesses that managers must identify and repair or replace. Build a strong organizational foundation for your employees. Support your people, and they will support you. When given the opportunity to achieve, workers in all kinds of businesses, from factories to venture capital firms, have proven this rule to be true. If you haven't seen it at your place of business, you may be mistaking your employees for problems. Quit squeezing them and start squeezing your organization. The result is employees who want to succeed and a business that flourishes right along with them. Who knows? Your employees may even stop hiding when they see you coming their way!

Squeezing employees may be easier than fighting the convoluted systems and cutting through the bureaucratic barnacles that have grown on your organization. You may be tempted to yell, "It's your fault that our department didn't achieve its goals!" Yes, blaming your employees for the organization's problems may be tempting, but doing so isn't going to solve the problems. Sure, you may get a quick, short-lived response when you push your people, but ultimately, you're failing to deal with the organization's real problems.

Everyone wants to "win." The difficult challenge of management is to define "winning" in such a way that it feels like winning for everyone in the organization. People are often competing with co-workers for a "piece of the pie" instead of trying to make the pie bigger. It's your job to help make a bigger pie.

Meeting the Management Challenge

When you're assigned a task in a nonmanagement position, completing it by yourself is fairly simple and straightforward. Your immediate results are in direct response to your effort. To accomplish your task, first you review the

task, then you decide how best to accomplish it, and then you set schedules and milestones for its successful completion. Assuming that you have access to the tools and resources necessary to accomplish your task, you can probably do it yourself quickly and easily. You're an expert doer — a bright, get-things-done type of person.



However, if you hold a management position, you were probably selected because you're skilled in the areas you're now responsible for managing. For example, Peter's friend John was a member of a team of software programmers developing a complex application for portable computers. When he was a team member, everything was fine. He came to work in a T-shirt and jeans — just like the rest of his teammates — and often spent time with his programmer friends after hours. The bond that the team shared changed, however, when John became the team's manager.

In his new role of manager, John first changed offices. Instead of sharing an open bay with the other programmers, he moved into his own office — one with four walls and a window looking out over the parking lot. A secretary guarded his door. Of course, the jeans and T-shirt had to go — they were replaced with a business suit and tie. Instead of having fun programming, John was suddenly concerned about more serious topics, such as cost overruns, schedule delays, percent direct, and days receivable. As John's role changed, so did John. And as John changed, so did his relationship with his co-workers. He was no longer a co-worker; he was The Boss. To achieve his goals, John quickly had to make the transition from a doer to a manager of doers.

When you want to get a task done through someone else, you employ a different set of skills than when you do the task yourself. This simple decision to pass the responsibility of completing a task to someone else introduces an interpersonal element into your equation. Being good technically at your job is no longer enough, no matter how good your technical skills are. Now you must have good planning, organization, leadership, and follow-up skills.



In other words, in addition to being a good doer, you have to be a good manager of doers. If you need some help in this area, discuss outside training opportunities (Management 101) with your supervisor or manager so you are equipped immediately. There's no time to waste!

Skipping quick fixes that don't stick

Despite what many people want you to believe, management isn't always a shoot-from-the-hip proposition. Sure, some managers may make decisions too quickly from time to time, but the most effective ones take the time they

need to consider their options before making a decision. Being a manager isn't easy. Yes, the best management solutions tend to be common sense; however, turning common sense into common practice is often difficult.



Management is an attitude, a way of life. Management is a very real desire to work with people and help them succeed, as well as a desire to help your organization succeed. Management is a life-long learning process that doesn't end when you walk out of a one-hour seminar or finish viewing a 25-minute video. Management is like the old story about the unhappy homeowner who was shocked to receive a bill for \$100 to fix a leaky faucet. When asked to explain the basis for this seemingly high charge, the plumber said, "Tightening the nut cost you \$5. Knowing which nut to tighten cost you \$95!"

Management is a people job. If you're not up to the task of working with people — helping them, listening to them, encouraging them, and guiding them — then you shouldn't be a manager.

Because management is such a challenge, an entire management training industry has sprung up, ready to help managers learn how to solve their problems. Unfortunately, trainers often focus on creating instant gratification among course attendees, many of whom have spent hundreds and even thousands of dollars to be there.



Once Peter went to one of those touchy-feely offsite management meetings meant to build teamwork and communication among the members of the group. Picture this: Just after lunch, a big tray of leftover veggies, bagels, fruit, and such was sitting on a table at the side of the room. The facilitator rose from his chair, faced the group, and said, "Your next task is to split yourselves into four groups and construct a model of the perfect manager by using only the items on that tray of leftovers." A collective groan filled the room. "I don't want to hear any complaints," the trainer said. "I just want to see happy people doing happy things for the next half-hour."

The teams feverishly went about their task of building the perfect manager. With some managers barely throttling the temptation to engage each other in a massive food fight, the little figures began to take shape. A banana here, a carrot stick there . . . and, voilá! After a brief competition for dominance, the winners were crowned. The result? We thought you'd never ask. Check out Figure 1-1.

We have to admit that the result was kind of cute (and kind of tasty, too), but did it really make a difference in the way these managers managed their employees when they returned to the office the next day? We don't think so. Was the seminar a nice break from the day-to-day office routine? Yes. Was it a meaningful teaching tool with lasting impact? No.

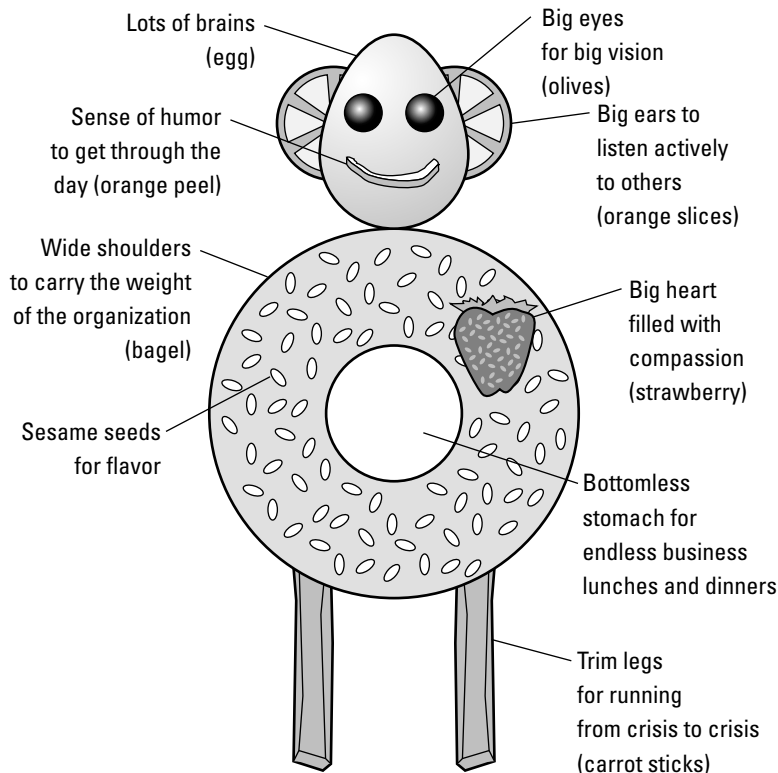


Figure 1-1:
The veggie manager.

Partnering with your employees

If this challenge isn't already enough, managers today face yet another challenge — one that has shaken the foundations of modern business. The new reality is partnering managers and workers in the workplace.

Originally, management meant dividing the company's work into discrete tasks, assigning the work to individual workers, and then closely monitoring the workers' performance and steering them in the right direction to accomplish their tasks on time and within budget. The old reality of management often relied on fear, intimidation, and power over people to accomplish goals. If things weren't going according to management's plan, management simply commanded its way out of the problem: "I don't care what you have to do to get it done — just get it done. Now!" The line between managers and workers was drawn clearly and drawn often.

Watch out! Technology explosion ahead!

In the new world of information technology, the old ways of doing business are being turned on their sides. With the presence of computer networks, e-mail, and voice mail, the walls that divide individuals, departments, and organizational units have come crashing down. In the words of Frederick Kovac, former vice president

of planning for the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, "It used to be, if you wanted information, you had to go up, over, and down through the organization. Now you just tap in. Everybody can know as much about the company as the chairman of the board."

In the new business environment, what's going on inside the organization is a reflection of what's going on outside the organization. The following factors are creating rapid and constant change in today's new business environment:

- ✔ A surge of global competition
- ✔ New technology and innovation
- ✔ The flattening of organizational hierarchies
- ✔ A global economic downturn, with widespread cost cutting and layoffs
- ✔ The rise of small business
- ✔ The changing values of today's workers
- ✔ The increasing demands for better customer service

Sure, managers still have to divide and assign work, but workers are taking on more of that responsibility. Most important, managers are finding out that they can't command their employees' best work — they have to create an environment that fosters their employees' desire to do their best work. In short, the new reality is the partnership of managers and workers in the workplace.

The landscape of business worldwide has changed dramatically during the past few decades. If you don't change with it, you're going to be left far behind your competitors. You may think that you can get away with treating your employees like "human assets" or children, but you can't. You can't, because your competitors are discovering how to unleash the hidden power of their employees. They're no longer just talking about it; they're doing it!

Being open to new ideas and procedures



A few years ago, Bob made a presentation to a group of high-tech managers. As he was wrapping up his presentation, he opened the floor to questions. A hand shot up. “With all the downsizing and layoffs we’ve endured, people are lucky to get a paycheck, much less anything else. Why do we have to bother to empower and reward employees?” Before Bob had a chance to respond, another manager in the audience shot back, “Because it’s a new army.”

This response really sums it all up. In business, times are changing. Now that employees have tasted the sweet nectar of empowerment, you can’t turn back. Companies that stick with the old way of doing business — the hierarchical, highly centralized model — will lose employees and customers to companies that make the new ways of doing business a part of their corporate culture. The best employees will leave the old-model companies in droves, seeking employers who will treat them with respect and who are willing to grant them greater autonomy and responsibility.

That leaves you with the employees who don’t want to take risks or rock the boat. You get the yes-men and yes-women. No one will challenge your ideas because they’re afraid to. No one will suggest better or more efficient ways to do business because they know that you won’t listen or care anyway. Your employees won’t bother to go out of their way to help a customer because you don’t trust them to make the most basic decisions — the ones that can make the biggest difference to the satisfaction, or the lack thereof, of your precious customers.

Imagine the difference between an employee who tells your key customer, “Sorry, my hands are tied. I am not allowed to make any exceptions to our policies,” and the employee who tells that customer, “Sure, I’ll do everything in my power to get you your order by your deadline.” Which type of employee do you think your customers prefer to do business with? Which type of employee do you prefer to do business with?



Managers used to rent behavior. Some workers were even called “hired hands.” Today hiring your hands isn’t good enough. You must find a way to engage their souls and bring their best efforts to the workplace each day.

Establishing two-way trust

Companies that provide exceptional customer service unleash their employees from the constraints of an overly controlling hierarchy and allow front-line workers to serve their customers directly and efficiently. For many years, Nordstrom, Inc. devoted exactly one page to its manual, shown in Figure 1-2.

Figure 1-2:
Nordstrom's
rules
show an
exceptional
amount
of trust in
employees.

We're glad to have you with our Company. Our number one goal is to provide outstanding customer service.

Set both your personal and professional goals high.

Nordstrom Rules:

Rule #1: Use your good judgement in all situations.

There will be no additional rules. Please feel free to ask your department manager, store manager, or division general manager any question at any time.

Source: Business and Society Review, Spring 1993, n85

Today employees also receive a standard employee handbook — the company's legal environment has changed considerably over the past decade — but this one page still guides most employee behavior at the company. You may think that a *small* company with five or ten employees can get away with a similar policy, but certainly not a big company like yours. However, Nordstrom isn't a small business, by any stretch of the imagination — unless you consider a company with 52,000 or so employees and more than \$8.5 billion in annual sales small.

How does management at a large business like Nordstrom get away with such a policy? They do it through trust.

First, Nordstrom hires good people. Second, the company gives them the training and tools to do their jobs well. Then management gets out of the way and lets the employees do their work. Nordstrom knows that it can trust its employees to make the right decisions because the company knows that it has hired the right people for the job and has trained them well.

We're not saying that Nordstrom doesn't have problems — every company does. But Nordstrom has taken a proactive stance in creating the environment that employees most need and want.

Can you say the same for your organization?



When you trust your employees, they respond by being trustworthy. When you recognize them for being independent and responsive to their customers, they continue to be independent and responsive to their customers. And when you give them the freedom to make their own decisions, they more often than not make good ones. With a little training and a lot of support, these decisions back up the best interests of the company because the right people at the right level of the organization make them.

Mastering the New Functions of Management



Remember the four “classic” functions of management — plan, organize, lead, and control — that you learned in school? (Yeah, we were asleep in that class, too.) These management functions form the foundation from which every manager works. Although these basic functions are fine for taking care of most of your day-to-day management duties, they fail to reflect the new reality of the workplace and the new partnership of managers and workers. What’s needed is a new set of management functions that builds upon the four classic functions of management. You’re in luck. The sections that follow describe the functions of the new manager in the 21st-century workplace.

Energize

Today’s managers are masters of making things happen — starting with themselves. As the saying goes, “If it’s to be, it’s to begin with me.” Think of the best managers you know. What one quality sets them apart from the rest? Is it their organizational skills, their fairness, or their technical ability? Perhaps their ability to delegate or the long hours they keep sets them apart.



All these traits may be important to a manager’s success, but we haven’t yet named the unique quality that makes a good manager great. The most important management function is to get people excited and inspired — that is, to *energize* them.

Great managers create far more energy than they consume. The best managers are organizational catalysts. Instead of taking energy from an organization, they channel and amplify it to the organization. In every interaction, effective managers add to the natural energy of their employees and leave

the employees in a higher energy state than when they started the interaction. Management becomes a process of transmitting the excitement that you feel about your organization and its goals to your employees in terms that they can understand and appreciate. And certainly get their ideas and, where appropriate, their buy-in for even more success! Before you know it, your employees will be as excited about the organization as you are, and you can simply allow their energy to carry you forward.

A picture is worth a thousand words. This statement is as true for the pictures that you paint in the minds of others as for the pictures that people paint on canvas or print on the pages of magazines and books. Imagine taking a vacation with your family or friends. As the big day draws near, you keep the goal exciting and fresh in the minds of your family or friends by creating a vision of the journey that awaits you. Vivid descriptions of white-sand beaches, towering redwoods, glittering skylines, secluded lakes, hot food, and indoor plumbing paint pictures in the minds of each of your fellow travelers. With this vision in mind, everyone works toward a common goal of a successful vacation.



Successful managers create compelling visions — pictures of a future organization that inspire and compel employees to bring out their best performance.

Empower

Have you ever worked for someone who didn't let you do your job without questioning your every decision? Maybe you spent all weekend working on a special project, only to have your boss casually discard it. "What were you thinking when you did this, Elizabeth? Our customers will never buy into that approach!" Or maybe you went out of your way to help a customer, accepting a return shipment of an item against company policy. "Why do you think we have policies — because we enjoy killing trees? No! If we made exceptions for everyone, we'd go out of business!" How did it feel to have your sincere efforts at doing a great job disparaged? What was your reaction? Chances are, you won't bother making the extra effort again.

Despite rumors to the contrary, when you empower your employees, you don't stop managing. What changes is the way you manage. Managers still provide vision, establish organizational goals, and determine shared values. However, managers must establish a corporate infrastructure — skills training, teams, and so on — that supports empowerment. And although all your employees may not want to be empowered, you still have to provide an environment that supports employees who are eager for a taste of the freedom to apply their personal creativity and expertise to your organization.

What managers really do

With tongue planted firmly in cheek, we universally agree that all managers perform five functions in an organization:

- ✔ **Eat:** Management clearly has its rewards, one of which is an expense account and all the company-paid lunches and dinners you can get away with. And if those yo-yos in accounting dare to question the business purpose of your meals, you can always threaten to leave them off your list of invitees.
- ✔ **Meet:** Meetings are truly a perk of management. The higher you rise in an organization, the more time you spend in meetings. Instead of doing productive work, you spend more time than ever listening to presentations that have no relevance to your department, drinking three-day-old coffee, and keeping close tabs on your watch as your meeting drags on well past its scheduled ending time.
- ✔ **Punish:** With so many wayward employees, the best managers learn to punish early and punish often. What better way to show your employees that you care? Punishment also sends a welcome signal to upper management that you don't put up with any nonsense from your underlings.
- ✔ **Obstruct:** When you ask managers what single achievement makes them proudest, they are likely to bring out policies as thick as the Yellow Pages that were carefully drafted over many years. A close look at the policy may reveal a package of deftly written red tape that does more to prevent good customer service than it does to support it.
- ✔ **Obscure:** Managers are masters of the art of miscommunication. No one knows better than a manager that information is power: The people who have it wield the power, and the people who don't are lost. With potential enemies all around, why give anyone else a chance to get an advantage over you? "Hey! That information is on a need-to-know basis only!" And for heaven's sake, why let your employees in on the inner workings of the organization? They wouldn't appreciate or understand it anyway, right?

Actually, this *isn't* the list of the functions of management. Although the list may ring true in many cases, we're just pulling your leg.



Great managers allow their employees to do great work. This role is a vital function of management, for even the greatest managers in the world can't succeed all by themselves. To achieve the organizations' goals, managers depend on their employees' skills. Effective management means leveraging the efforts of every member of a work unit to focus on a common purpose. If you're constantly doing your employees' work for them, not only have you lost the advantage of the leverage your employees can provide you, but you're also putting yourself on the path to stress, ulcers, and worse.

However, far worse than the personal loss that you suffer when you don't empower employees is that everyone in your organization loses. Your employees lose because you aren't allowing them to stretch themselves or to show creativity or initiative. Your organization loses the insights that its creative workforce brings with it. Finally, your customers lose because your employees are afraid to provide them with exceptional service. Why should they, if they're constantly worried that you will punish them for taking initiative or for pushing the limits of the organization to better serve your customers?

As William McKnight, former CEO of manufacturing giant 3M, put it, "The mistakes people make are of much less importance than the mistakes management makes if it tells people exactly what to do."

Support

A manager's job is no longer that of a watchdog, police officer, or executioner. Increasingly, managers must be coaches, colleagues, and cheerleaders for the employees they support. The main concern of today's managers needs to be shaping a more supportive work environment that enables each employee to feel valued and be more productive.



When the going gets tough, managers support their employees. Now, this doesn't mean that you do everything for your employees or make their decisions for them. It does mean that you give your employees the training, resources, and authority to do their jobs, and then you get out of the way. You're always there for your employees to help pick up the pieces if they fall, but fall they must if they're going to learn. The idea is the same as in learning to skate: If you're not falling, you're not learning.



The key to creating a supportive environment is establishing trust or *openness* throughout an organization. In an open environment, employees can bring up questions and concerns. In fact, they're encouraged to do so. When the environment is truly open, an individual can express concerns without fear of retribution. Hidden agendas don't exist, and people feel free to make the same remarks in business meetings that they'd say after work. When employees see that their managers are receptive to new ideas, they're more likely to feel invested in the organization and to think of more and better ways to improve systems, solve problems, save money, and better serve customers.

Managers also support each other. Guarding personal fiefdoms, fighting between departments, and withholding information have no place in the modern organization; companies cannot afford to support these dysfunctional behaviors. All members of the organization, from top to bottom, must

realize that they play on the same team. To win, team members must support each other and keep their co-workers apprised of the latest information. Which team are you on?

Communicate

Without a doubt, communication is the lifeblood of any organization, and managers are the common element that connects different levels of employees. We have seen firsthand the positive effects on a business and its employees when managers communicate, and the negative effects when managers don't.



Managers who don't communicate effectively are missing out on a vital role of management.

Communication is a key function for managers today. Information is power, and as the speed of business accelerates, information must be communicated to employees faster than ever. Constant change and increasing turbulence in the business environment necessitate more communication, not less. Who's going to be around in five years? The manager who has mastered this function or the one who has not?

With the proliferation of e-mail, voice mail, text messages, tweets, and the other new means of communication in modern business, managers simply have no excuse not to communicate with their employees. You can even use the telephone or try a little old-fashioned face-to-face talk with your employees and co-workers.



To meet the expectations you set for them, your employees have to be aware of your expectations. A goal is great on paper, but if you don't communicate it to employees and don't keep them up-to-date on their progress toward achieving that goal, how can you expect them to reach it? Simply, you can't. It's like training for the Olympics but never getting feedback on how you're doing against the competition.



Employees often appreciate the little things — an invitation to an upcoming meeting, praise for a job well done, or an insight into the organization's finances. Not only does sharing this kind of information make a business run better, but it also creates tremendous goodwill and cements the trust that bonds your employees to the organization and to the successful completion of the organization's goals.

Taking the First Steps toward Becoming a Manager

Believe it or not, many managers are never formally trained to be managers. For many of you, management is just something that's added to your job description. One day you may be a computer programmer working on a hot new Web browser, and the next day you may be in charge of the new development team. Before, you were expected only to show up to work and create a product. Now you're expected to lead and motivate a group of workers toward a common goal. Sure, you may get paid more to do the job, but the only training you may get for the task is in the school of hard knocks.

Managers (or managers-to-be) can easily discover how to become good managers by following the recommendations in the sections that follow. No one way is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; each has its pluses and minuses.

Look and listen

If you're fortunate enough to have had a skilled teacher or mentor during the course of your career, you've been treated to an education in management that's equal to or better than any MBA program. You've learned firsthand the right and wrong ways to manage people. You've learned what it takes to get things done in your organization, and you've learned that customer satisfaction involves more than simply giving your customers lip service.



Unfortunately, any organization with good management also has living, breathing examples of the wrong way to manage employees. You know the people we're talking about: the manager who refuses to make decisions, leaving employees and customers hanging. Or the boss who refuses to delegate even the simplest decision to employees. Or the supervisor who insists on managing every single aspect of a department, no matter how small or inconsequential. Examples of the right way to manage employees are, regrettably, still few and far between.



You can benefit from the behaviors that poor managers model. When you find a manager who refuses to make decisions, for example, carefully note the impact that the management style has on workers, other managers, and customers. You feel your own frustration. Make a mental note: "I'll never, ever demotivate another person like that." Indecision at the top inevitably leads to indecision within all ranks of an organization — especially when employees are punished for filling the vacuum left by indecisive managers. Employees become confused, and customers become concerned as the organization drifts aimlessly.

I meet, you meet, we all meet

According to the experts, managers are attending more meetings than ever. The average businessperson spends more than 25 percent of his or her time in meetings, but middle managers spend 40 percent of their time in meetings — worse, executives spend up to a staggering 80 percent of their time in meetings. Even more shocking is that about half of every hour spent in meetings is wasted by the participants' inefficiency and ineffectiveness.

Observe the manager who depends on fear and intimidation to get results. What are the real results of this style of management? Do employees look forward to coming to the office every day? Are they all pulling for a common vision and goal? Are they extending themselves to bring innovation to work processes and procedures? Or are they more concerned with just getting through the day without being yelled at? Think about what you would do differently to get the results you want.

You can always learn something from other managers, whether they're good managers or bad ones.



Do and learn

Perhaps you're familiar with this old saying (attributed to Lao Tze):

Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day,

Teach a man to fish, and he eats for a lifetime.

Such is the nature of managing employees. If you make all the decisions, do the work your employees are able to do when given the chance, and try to carry the entire organization on your own shoulders, you're harming your employees and your organization far more than you can imagine. Your employees never find out how to succeed on their own, and after a while, they quit trying. In your sincere efforts to bring success to your organization, you stunt your employees' growth and make your organization less effective and vital.

Top five management Web sites

Wondering where to find the best information on the Web about the topics addressed in this chapter? Here are our top five favorites:

- ✓ Harvard Business School Working Knowledge: hbswk.hbs.edu
- ✓ *Leader to Leader* magazine: www.pfdf.org/knowledgecenter/journal.aspx
- ✓ *Fast Company* magazine: www.fastcompany.com
- ✓ *MIT Sloan Management Review*: sloanreview.mit.edu
- ✓ *The McKinsey Quarterly*: www.mckinseyquarterly.com



Simply reading a book (even this one) or watching someone else manage — or fail to manage — isn't enough. To take advantage of the lessons you learn, you have to put them into practice. Keep these key steps in mind:

1. **Take the time to assess your organization's problems.** Which parts of your organization work and which don't? Why or why not? You can't focus on all your problems at once. Concentrate on a few problems that are the most important, and solve them before you move on to the rest. If issues exist across client or business groups, schedule time to discuss them with key stakeholders and idea-share to resolve problems.
2. **Take a close look at yourself.** What do you do to help or hinder your employees when they try to do their jobs? Do you give them the authority to make decisions? Just as important, do you support them when they go out on a limb for the organization? Study your personal interactions throughout your business day. Do they result in positive or negative outcomes? If you haven't had a personality/management assessment done, consider it. If you decide to move forward with one, then budget for it and schedule a follow-up meeting after it is conducted to discuss the results.
3. **Try out the techniques that you learn from reading or from observing other managers at work.** Go ahead! Nothing changes if you don't change first. "If it's to be, it's to begin with me."
4. **Step back and watch what happens.** We promise that you'll see a difference in the way you get tasks done and the way your customers and employees respond to your organization's needs and goals.