

Interface/Koppelvlak

What I look for in a manager

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Education and training are clearly of importance for the manager. Management training is being increasingly recognized as a necessity for the development of all-round managers, as business grows more complex and a great variety of techniques and tools are available to be used by the manager. But there is much more to the making of a good manager and, having checked on education and training, the eight factors I look for are:

Decision-making ability

The manager who cannot make decisions is no manager. A manager's indecision or procrastination reduces the productivity of the whole team working for him or her. Of course, the manager must be sure he has all the facts before considering a decision but once they are collected, sifted and considered, he must decide. It is better to make a bad decision now and then than to make no decision at all.

Future mindedness

This is a fast moving world in which the business environment changes rapidly. The manager who thinks only of yesterday and today – with perhaps a little peek into tomorrow – is no good. We must be concerned with the tomorrows, we must plan for change, short, medium and long term.

A sensible ordering of priorities

Too many managers are busy on the wrong things. Much time is wasted by managers who have not thought about their priorities. Often the important job is set aside in favour of the unimportant. Often jobs are tackled which someone else, probably a subordinate, should be handling.

Teamwork

The loner is no good as a manager except in his own one-man business. Today needs managers who can work with other managers and with specialists of all sorts, drawing the best from them and ensuring that they are kept in the picture and their advice taken. Communication is the name of the game if the organization is to be effective. There is plenty of room for individuality and individual effort but it must be part of the team effort.

Being a generalist

Every manager has a speciality, whether it is accounting, law or some branch of engineering. But a manager must also be a generalist. He must, of course, draw on his specialist knowledge but that must not cloud his decisions on wider issues. In particular, he must remember that he is no longer in the discipline from which he came and must not try to do the jobs of those who are now his specialists in accounting, law or engineering. He must seek to widen his knowledge and broaden his views to take an objective account of the facts arising from all disciplines.

Crisis-handling ability

No matter how well we order our businesses, there are bound to be crises. The good manager recognizes a crisis for what it is and gives it the attention it deserves. He ensures that routine matters continue, that precipitate action is avoided and a proper perspective maintained. Beware, however, of the manager who loves crises – he will create them just for the joy of managing them!

Entrepreneurial quality

While it is not true that managers are born and not made, there is plenty of evidence that the true entrepreneur, the money-maker, is born, not made. Nevertheless, all managers need to some degree or other entrepreneurial ability if they are to be really successful. An understanding of marketing and finance helps and a lively imagination is a fundamental quality.

Integrity

First there is intellectual integrity, a basic requirement for the good manager – the person who agrees because he or she really does agree or, if not, has the courage to disagree, the person who accepts blame when in the wrong and does not try to pass it off on to others.

Another facet of integrity is honesty. Regrettably, South African business seems to be permeated with dishonesty. Managers are often in a position to make arrangements for their personal gain, for kickbacks and the like, and all too many take advantage of this. Inevitably their actions lead to similar activities lower down the line and the whole organization becomes rotten. Everyone has a duty to eliminate dishonesty – it should not be condoned simply because someone more senior is involved.

The individual who is well trained and has the qualities listed above, will undoubtedly be a good manager. Here and there such a person will fail, but if we look for the good qualities in people and develop these rather than rejecting them for their odd weaknesses, we will make them even more effective.