

White Paper:

Step 1: Developing Management Skills

Phil Devendorf
PDServices

Recent studies published by Robert Half International show two important facts:

1. Executives still view employee retention as their number one concern.
2. The top reason for losing top performing employees was unhappiness with management.

A Right Management Survey from 4Q 2010 says that 84% of employees want a new job.

In these times, we cannot afford to lose top performing employees. With tightened budgets and greater competition, we must focus on cost effective means to avoid this type of turnover and leverage productivity. There are three areas that may offer a big return for a small investment:

1. Targeted, personalized management development
2. Improved performance management processes
3. Objective information for selecting, training and coaching employees

Management Development

My daughter recently graduated from college and took a job with an insurance company. The company invested 3 months of teaching her the insurance business in general and another three months of training and apprenticeship in her claims position. It is typical for organizations to invest in training and onboarding new hires.

Often, however, a new manager/supervisor promoted from within is simply given a pat on the back and an encouraging word rather than training for his/her new responsibilities. Doesn't the level of responsibility of a supervisor/manager exceed that of an entry level position? Is it surprising that these managers are often ineffective?

A good "Management 101" program is best for new managers, but many of us are saddled with a staff of poorly trained and, to some degree, ineffective supervisors and managers. In most cases the managers have varied strengths and development needs. We don't want to waste time and money providing development for specific managers in competencies they have already mastered. Instead, we need to identify areas of development need and maximize the return on training by focusing on these areas that can offer the highest return.

Management Development Process



We suggest implementing a simple, repeatable process for developing individual supervisory/management skills in your existing management team. The process includes the following steps:

1. Identify development needs
2. Create a development action plan
3. Implement the plan
4. Measure the impact

Identify Development Needs

The most effective approach to developing management skills in your existing management team is to first identify the manager's individual development needs. Don't be fooled into thinking that you know, or that their managers know what these are. The people who know best are their direct reports, their peers, and their managers (in that order). The best way I have found to identify individual management development needs is through implementing a good 360 feedback survey.

A best in class 360 feedback survey will measure competencies that are appropriate and important to performing effectively as a manager in your organization. It should include feedback from the participant (targeted manager), his/her boss, and anonymous feedback from direct reports and peers. The results should be presented in a fashion that facilitates identification of the participant's strengths and development needs and is oriented to development versus evaluation. Depending on the number of managers you have, online administration and management tools may be important in order to contain the time and effort spent to implement the surveys.

A best in class 360 tool will provide an analysis report showing scores by competency broken out by demographic group (boss, participant, peers, and direct report). The report must protect the anonymity of peers and direct reports. It is helpful if the report drills down to the item level in order to provide detail for further analyzing strengths and development needs.

The 360 should summarize with a ranked listing of competencies by score to facilitate development planning. If the tool includes a method of prioritizing competencies for the participant's job that should be indicated with the ranked listing. Go to <http://www.pdservices.com/pdf/CPIndividualReport.pdf> for an example of a best in class 360 report.

When implementing a management development process across your organization, you will find it helpful to roll up the individual 360 results into an organizational view. This provides you with insight into the areas of strength and weakness in your organization as a whole and or sub-groups (i.e. divisions, departments, locations, etc.). That insight will help you to decide on needs to roll out widespread training versus individualized development activities. An example of a roll up report can be viewed at <http://www.pdservices.com/pdf/CPExecutiveReport.pdf>.

Create a Development Plan

Once you have the 360 survey results, each participant should meet with HR and/or their manager to agree on an individualized development plan. This plan should consider the relative development needs identified in the 360 and the importance of those competencies in effectively performing their job responsibilities. A plan that focuses on developing 1 to 3 competencies over a 12 month period has proven to be the most reasonable.

Start with the most significant development needs highlighted in the 360. The planning team will want to consider the importance of each competency to performance in the participant's current job. If delegation is a development need, for example, but improvement will not make an impact on the job you may chose to focus on another competency.

Also consider the participant's career path at this point. If developing the participant for the next job is an objective, weigh the importance of each competency in that job as well. 360 feedback is often a component of good succession planning processes.

The Development Plan itself can be quite simple. Identify 1 to 3 competencies to focus on based on 360 scoring. For each competency list development activities with target dates for completion.

Selecting development activities now becomes the challenge. You will want to consider options that specifically address the competencies identified as focus areas for the specific manager. You may have internal or external training that will fit the bill. We have found that a combination of training and coaching to be the most effective approach. Training alternatives may include online training available through a myriad of sources, internal or external courses, self paced reading, coaching, or mentoring with someone strong in that specific competency. Many organizations create a matrix of training options available by competency to guide this step. A sample development plan/matrix, developed by

Advanced Leadership in Canton, OH using their development programs can be viewed at http://www.coachsims.com/pdfs/Individual_Development_Plan.pdf.

Implement the Plan

Coaching may be implemented as a supplement or as an alternative to training. We highly advise that, at a minimum, someone is assigned to hold the participant accountable for implementing the plan. All too often, development plans fall by the wayside due to the day to day fires and priorities the participant is facing. The participant's manager is generally the most effective person to hold the participant accountable. I suggest that implementing the development plan and subsequent improvements are added as goals to the participant's performance appraisal process.

It is important to note that executive buy in to management development can make a huge difference at this stage. If the participant recognizes that developing his/her management skills is important, they are more likely to follow through. Organizations who include top level executives as participants in this development process improve the buy-in at all levels.

Selecting a coach for the participant is important. You have the option of internal coaches (often the participant's manager) or external coaches:

Internal Coach Advantages	External Coach Advantages
Knowledge of organization culture	Less intimidating to participant, more trusting
Knowledge of organization management processes	Often a trained/experienced coach
Authority (if manager) to drive the plan	May be less biased
Tied to participant's success (if manager)	

Our 360 tool offers a management report that includes a coaching guide. The coaching guide is written for the manager-coach but is useful to any coach you may select.

Measure the Impact

This final step is often overlooked. We suggest that a follow up 360 be administered within 12 to 18 months. The results are compared to the initial 360 to assess improvement in the competencies included in the development plan. Our 360 has an optional report that compares the two 360 results side by side for just this purpose.

As the Management Development Process graphic suggests, this measurement step is also a segue into the start of a new development cycle. The new 360 will often highlight new development needs. Hopefully, the participant has improved in the focus competencies and new competencies are found to be focus areas for the new development cycle. If the same competencies need continued focus, the development plan should be adjusted to refocus and replan for improvement in the same competencies.

Summary

There are many ways to approach developing managers. The most important thing is to recognize the need and potential payback, then take action. I have found the process suggested above to be very

effective but anything you can do to improve management skills will likely have a positive impact on retaining top performers and improving organizational effectiveness.

Note: PDServices offers a 360 management feedback system that offers an excellent 360 feedback survey coupled with individualized development guidance and coaching guidance for development needs. This allows for creation of an effective, personalized development program for participants. Information is available by contacting PDServices at 740-397-4928 or by visiting their website at <http://www.pdservices.com/employee-survey-360-feedback.php>.