

PART 1

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MANAGING  
YOUR TEAM

We all have to work with people. These may be loosely known as a team, department, squad, crew—even a posse. It doesn't matter. The mistake a lot of managers make is to think they are managing people. They think that people are their tools. Make the people successful and you have the successful manager—or so the theory goes.

But unfortunately this is a myth, and we need to see that the real role of the manager is to manage processes rather than people. People can manage themselves if you let them. What you need to be concentrating on is the real job of management—the strategy. The team is merely a means to fulfilling that end. If all your people could be replaced by machines—and how many of us haven't prayed that this might happen?—we would still need a strategy, still manage the process.

The people may have disappeared and been replaced by automatons, but the real job would still be there. The good manager is managing change, process, strategy, progress, and balance. In all of this we might need our “people,” but we also may not. We can't ignore the people, of course, but we should be handing over as much self-management to them as we possibly can.

“PEOPLE CAN MANAGE  
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“WHAT YOU NEED TO BE  
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Of course we, as managers, have to work with real flesh-and-blood people and we have to know what motivates them, how they think and feel, why they come to work, why they give their best (or their worst), what they are afraid of, and their hopes and dreams. We have to encourage them, coach them, give them the resources to do their job and manage themselves, oversee their processes, and set their strategy for them. We will worry about them, look out for them, be on their side and support them. But we won't manage them. We will let them manage themselves while we concentrate on our real role as a manager.

# Get Them Emotionally Involved

“Work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed.”

Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic

You manage people. People who are paid to do a job. But if it is “just a job” to them, you’ll never get their best. If they come to work looking to clock in and clock out and do as little as they can get away with in between, then you’re doomed to failure, my friend. On the other hand, if they come to work looking to enjoy themselves, looking to be stretched, challenged, inspired, and to get involved, then you have a big chance of getting the very best out of them. Trouble is, the jump from drudge to super team is entirely up to you. It is *you* who has to inspire them, lead them, motivate them, challenge them, get them emotionally involved.

That’s okay. You like a challenge yourself, don’t you? The good news is that getting a team emotionally involved is easy. All you have to do is make them care about what they are doing. And that’s easy too. You have to get them to see the relevance of what they are doing, how it makes an impact on people’s lives, how they provide for the needs of other human beings, how they can reach out and touch people by what they do at work. Get them convinced—because it is true—that what they do makes a difference, that it contributes to society in some way other than filling the owner’s or shareholders’ pockets, or ensures that the chief executive gets a big fat paycheck.

# RULE 1

And yes, I know it's easier to show how they contribute if you manage nurses rather than an advertising sales team, but if you think about it, then you can find value in any role and instill pride in those who do whatever job it is. Prove it? Okay. Well, those who sell advertising space are helping other companies, some of which may be very small, reach their markets. They are alerting potential customers to things they may have wanted for a long time and may really need. They are keeping the newspaper or magazine afloat because it relies on ad sales income, and that magazine or newspaper delivers information and/or gives pleasure to the people who buy it (otherwise they wouldn't, would they?).

Get them to care because that's an easy thing to do. Look, this is a given. Everyone deep down wants to be valued and to be useful. The cynics will say this is nonsense, but it is true, deep down true. All you have to do is reach down far enough and you will find feeling, concern, responsibility, and involvement. Drag all that stuff up and they'll follow you forever and not even realize why.

Oh, just make sure that you've convinced yourself first before you try this out on your team. Do you believe that what you do makes a positive difference? If you're not sure, reach down, deep down, and find a way to care.

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# Know What a Team Is and How It Works

“Gettin’ good players is easy. Gettin’ ’em to play together is the hard part.”

Casey Stengel, former manager, New York Yankees

So what is a team and how does it operate? If we are going to be successful managers, we have to know the answers to these questions.

A team isn’t a collection of people. It is an organization with its own dynamics, qualities, and conventions. Without knowing these things you will flounder. Knowing them, you can work your team to achieve greatness.

In every team there are a variety of people all pushing and shoving in different directions and with unequal force. Some shove louder, if you know what I mean. Others are happy to push from the back. Others don’t appear to be doing anything, but you’ll need them for ideas.

If you haven’t looked at team dynamics before, I urge you to read Meredith Belbin’s *Management Teams: Why They Succeed or Fail*.\*(If you have, pass right on to the next Rule.) This is designed for managers concerned with achieving results by getting the best from their key people. I’ll paraphrase what he says, but I do urge you to practice what he preaches.

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\* R. Meredith Belbin, *Management Teams: Why They Succeed or Fail*, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2nd edition 2003.

# RULE 2

Belbin says that there are nine team roles—and we all carry out one or more functions of these team roles. Yes, it is fun to identify our own, but it is much more useful to identify your team's and then work with that information.

The nine team roles are as follows:

- The Plant—They are original thinkers; they generate new ideas; they offer solutions to problems; they think in radically different ways, laterally, imaginatively.
- The Resource Investigator—They are creative; they like to take ideas and run with them; they are extroverted and popular.
- The Coordinator—They are highly disciplined and controlled; they can focus on objectives; they unify a team.
- The Shaper—They are very achievement orientated; they like to be challenged and to get results.
- The Monitor Evaluator—They analyze and balance and weigh; they are calm and detached; they are objective thinkers.
- The Team Worker—They are supportive and cooperative; they make good diplomats because they only want what is best for the team.
- The Implementer—They have good organizational skills; they display common sense; they like to get the job done.
- The Completer—They check details; they tidy up after themselves; they are painstakingly conscientious.
- The Specialist—They are dedicated to acquiring a specialized skill; they are extremely professional; they have drive and dedication.

Now you know who you might have in your team. So what exactly is a team and how are you going to make yours more effective? Again, read Belbin and also come to understand a team is a group where all the members focus on a collective target. A team doesn't come together well when each individual member focuses on their own target—be that just getting to the end of the day, their own personal progress, how to betray the boss (that's you, by the way), use work as a social club, and so on.

## RULE 2

“A TEAM DOESN’T COME  
TOGETHER WELL WHEN  
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THEIR OWN TARGET.”

You’ll know you have a team when you hear “we” and “us” more often than “I” and “me.”

You’ll know you have a team when difficult decisions become easy—because someone says, “It’s okay, we’re all in this together.”

You’ll know you have a team when the team tells you it is a team.

# Set Realistic Targets —No, Really Realistic

“Let’s make a dent in the universe.”

Steve Jobs, CEO, Apple

When I was doing research for this book, someone said that setting realistic targets was unrealistic and that all targets should be “stretching” ones because that would impress the board. Now, can you see the problem here? Yep, we’re not talking about motivating a team, getting a job done, creating an atmosphere of success and creativity. No, we’re talking about impressing the board. Now on paper that might be a smart thing to do if your board is made up of monkeys, but I bet it isn’t. I bet it’s made up of pretty shrewd cookies who would see through a maneuver like that in a nanosecond.

When I say realistic, I don’t say lower or easy-to-achieve targets. I say realistic. That might mean taxing. It might mean a struggle. It might mean your team has to redouble its efforts, work harder, longer, smarter. But Rule 3 says realistic, and that means achievable, within your grasp. And yes, you might have to stretch a bit.

Realistic means you know what your team is capable of and what is expected by your bosses. Somehow you will have to marry the two to keep both sides happy. You can’t pressure your team out of existence, nor can you let your bosses think you’re lazy.

If your bosses insist on setting targets that aren’t realistic, you must feed that back to them. Don’t argue or procrastinate; feed it back to them. Ask how they think the targets could be achieved.

## RULE 3

Say they are unrealistic. Be very well prepared, make your case that the targets are unrealistic and ask again how they think they could be achieved. Suggest a realistic target of your own, well supported by facts and figures. Keep feeding the problem back to your bosses and asking for clarification. Sooner or later they must set a more realistic target or order you to achieve the impossible. Either way, you are resolved of the problem. If they set you realistic targets, then all you need to do is meet them. (You know you can do this.) If they order you to fulfill unrealistic ones, you are also in the clear; when you fail to achieve the unachievable you will be able to explain that at the time you did register your protest and bring your case back to them.

“KEEP FEEDING THE  
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BOSSSES.”

# Hold Effective Meetings —No, Really Effective

“The ideas that come out of most brainstorming sessions are usually superficial, trivial, and not very original. They are rarely useful. The process, however, seems to make uncreative people feel that they are making innovative contributions and that others are listening to them.”

A. Harvey Block, CEO, Bokenon Systems

We’ve all been to them—the meetings that drag on, people who ramble, agendas written on the back of an envelope or spur of the moment, any-other-business surprises, lack of information, insufficient notice.

As a manager you will have to hold meetings. Make them effective. Decide in advance what the objective of the meeting is and make sure you meet that objective.

Basically, meetings only have four purposes:

- To create and fuse a team
- To impart information
- To brainstorm ideas (and make decisions)
- To collect information (and make decisions)

Some meetings might cover one or more of these, but you should still be aware of that and add it into your objective. If your meeting is to impart information, then do it and get the heck out. If it’s a discussion about that information you want, then that’s a

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different type of meeting and as such should have different objectives. Be aware that some meetings are there to help your team meet each other, bond, socialize together, find out about each other, and see you in your true role as the team leader.

If you want your meetings to be effective, then remain firmly in control—no wishy-washy democracies here. You are the manager and you are in charge—end of story. To be effective you shouldn't allow anyone to reminisce, ramble, refuse to be quiet, or relax. Keep 'em moving fast and get them out the door as soon as you can.

You don't do “any other business”—ever. If it's important it should be on the agenda. If it isn't, then it shouldn't be there at all. “Any other business” is invariably someone trying to put something over on someone else. Don't allow it—ever.

Hold all meetings at the end of the day rather than at the beginning. Everyone's anxious to leave for home and it keeps meetings shorter; at the beginning of the day everyone has plenty of time to digress and chat. Of course, if it is a bonding meeting, you can hold it at the beginning of the day.

## RULE 4

See how many meetings you could hold by e-mail, phone, one to one. (Cut out everyone who isn't absolutely essential.)

Start all meetings on time. Never wait for anyone. Never go back over stuff for latecomers. If they've missed something vital, they can get it from others after the meeting and it'll learn 'em to be on time next time.\* Useful tip—never schedule meetings to begin exactly on the hour, always say 3:10 rather than 3 o'clock. You'll find people will always be more punctual if you set an “odd” time. Try 3:35 if you want to be really wacky.

Schedule the meeting far enough in advance—but not too far—so that no one can say they had something else scheduled. Confirm the day before with everyone to make sure they have remembered and can make it.

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\* The Toad, having finished his breakfast, picked up a stout stick and swung it vigorously, belabouring imaginary animals. 'I'll learn 'em to steal my house!' he cried. 'I'll learn 'em, I'll learn 'em!' 'Don't say “learn 'em,” Toad,' said the Rat, greatly shocked. 'It's not good English.' 'What are you always nagging at Toad for?' inquired the Badger, rather peevishly. 'What's the matter with his English? It's the same what I use myself, and if it's good enough for me, it ought to be good enough for you!' 'I'm very sorry,' said the Rat humbly. 'Only I THINK it ought to be “teach 'em”, not “learn 'em.”' 'But we don't WANT to teach 'em,' replied the Badger. 'We want to LEARN 'em – learn 'em, learn 'em! And what's more, we're going to DO it, too!' (Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*)

## RULE 4

You decide who keeps the minutes—and make sure they do, and to your satisfaction. You don't have to be bossy or aggressive about this, just firm, friendly, and utterly in control.

Make sure every point on the agenda ends up with an action plan—no action plan means it was just a chat. Or a decision, of course.

If meetings are getting too big—more than six people—start to subdivide them into committees and get your committees to report back.

And most important of all—engrave this one on your heart—all meetings must have a definite purpose. At the end of the meeting, you must be able to say whether or not you met that purpose. Oh yes, and hold all meetings on uncomfortable chairs (or standing, à la *West Wing*)—that speeds things up considerably.

# Make Meetings Fun

“Don’t tell me you lost your sense of humor already?”

Roger Rabbit in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*

I guess that when you were working your way up to your illustrious position of today you had to sit through many interminable meetings, all boring, all stupifyingly dull. Well, the pattern has to be broken somewhere, and I’m relying on you to break it. The old ways of doing meetings has to stop, and you’re the very person to do it.

So let’s make ’em fun. Now, before we go on, I remember a tip I read somewhere. Basically you were supposed to give out five coins to each meeting member and when they wanted to speak they had to spend a penny. Once they had used up their coins they were done and couldn’t say anything more. It was supposed to make people really cautious about speaking and reluctant to

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## RULE 5

spend all their coins on trivial topics. Fun? Maybe. But it would also get you quite a reputation as a fool and/or an ineffectual meeting leader—as would other suggestions, such as the following:

- Costumes
- Food and/or drink (unless it's lunchtime, in which case that's functional, not fun; or if you take your team out to a restaurant or to a bar, and then it's not a meeting, it's a bonding session—or a thank you, of course: *see* Rule 17)
- Games, quizzes, or contests of any type
- Having small surprises such as chocolates hidden under the chairs
- A talking stick (don't ask—a New Age Californian thing)
- Blindfolds
- Letting the most junior member chair the meeting.

All of these head toward farce, ruin, and idiocy. Don't go there.

So how can you lighten things up without looking like a fool? Well, for a start fun doesn't have to mean silly or stupid or unfunny.

Fun means not being stuffy, allowing people to be themselves and to bring their own contribution. Fun means allowing people to share things that have made them laugh without being frowned on. Fun is about letting people tell stories or anecdotes that lighten the mood. (Just know when to say, "Okay, back to work.") Fun means being flexible enough to allow other suggestions as to where and how you all meet. Perhaps your organization has a great boardroom—could you meet there? Or outside if the weather is good.

The confident manager—that's you—can be flexible because they are relaxed and cool and confident. The stuffy manager is frightened because they feel insecure and seek a rigid approach to prop up their lack of self-confidence.