Week 11 Db’s

CCWC

Define technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills. How do these three skills connect with the different levels of management? How do critical thinking and decision-making skills come into play?

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| Term: | Definition: | Explanation: |
| Technical Skills: | Expertise in a specific functional area or department. | Technical skills relate to the skills necessary to do a specific job. These types of skills are especially important to supervisory managers because they allow the managers to not only know how to do the tasks of their subordinates (when necessary), but also to employ their skillset to coach their employees effectively. |
| Human Skills: | The ability to work effectively with and through other people in a range of different relationships. | Human skills define the ability of a manager to cultivate professional relationships with the people who which they work with. These skills are invaluable to managers, especially middle management because of their role as communicator between Top Management and First-Line management. |
| Conceptual Skills: | The ability to grasp a big-picture view of the overall organization, the relationships among its various parts, and its fit in the broader competitive environment. | Conceptual skills are, well, the ability to understand and implement business concepts in a company.  These skills are most important in Top Management because they are the ones responsible for making "big picture" decisions for a company. |

***CRITICAL THINKING & DECISION MAKING***

While all three skillsets are more or less depending on the level of management, critical thinking and the ability to make decisions is important across all three, on all three levels.  These skills are what allows for management to take an abundance of information and make the most of it. In abstract, a top-level manager needs to be able to think critically about the future of a company-- whether or not it should expand, break into a new market, etc. -- and decide accordingly, a middle manager would need to do the same about *how* that decision will be taken from concept to reality, and finally a first-line manager would take that "how" and see that it is fulfilled on a daily basis.   An example of this chain:

The C.F.O. of a company is under pressure of stockholders to increase profitability

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The C.F.O. evaluates and thinks critically and examines the situation, realizing that the best way to increase profitability is to cut costs.

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The C.F.O. decides to implement a new operating budget, including a lower production budget.

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Middle management receives and examines the production budget, thinks critically about where money can be saved.

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Middle management decides after examination of the new budget that the direct overhead and materials budget cannot be altered, and decides that reducing labor costs is the only way to meet the new budget.

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Middle management thinks critically about how labor cost can be reduced-- should they reduce one of their front-line manager's pay? Lay-off employees? How?

↓

Middle management decides to delegate this decision, and informs front-line managers.

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The front-line manager then thinks critically about how to reduce labor costs.

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The front-line manager then decides to cut all performance bonuses in order to to meet the new budget.

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* View profile card for Chet Jessick

**Chet Jessick**

March 24 at 4:53 PM

Hi Victor,

Currently, which of these skills do you personally feel needs the most development? Why? How will you go about it?

Reply

* View profile card for Victor Harris

**Victor Harris**

1 hour ago

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**243** Words

Hey Chet,

Had you asked me that a month ago, I would have said my human skills need the most development because my technical skills in my position at work were already quite developed. However, because I am starting a new job in a couple of weeks, I think that my my technical skills will be needing the most improvement.  The position I am taking is in sales, similar to my current job -- but that's where the similarities end.  As a result, my technical skills in my new position will be virtually non-existent, and so that will be my focus for quite a while.

Luckily, my experience in sales and communicating with others will, for the most part carry over. But, when it comes to learning the new programs, sales process, procedures, industry standards, and clientele, I am going to, as they say, "be a sponge" during my 5 weeks of training. Although I can't hope to learn everything in a matter of weeks, I can learn as much as possible, as quickly as possible by paying close attention, taking notes, and staying engaged during those weeks.  One thing I've learned about myself is that I take customers' questions personally -- I hate saying "I don't know" to a question I should know the answer to -- so, I will take it upon myself to find the answers to those questions and better prepare myself for the next person who asks it.

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SoW:

"Managers cannot motivate anyone. They can only create an environment where motivated people can flourish."

This statement is true for a couple of reasons, but before we can understand the **why** someone is motivated, we must first understand the ***what***.  In order for a person to feel motivated, there has to be an underlying motive that makes them feel that way.  By definition, a motive is a reason for doing something, and while good managers do have the ability to identify, and even exacerbate a motive that an employee has for working, motives are an intrinsic part of what makes that employee who they are, and therefor cannot be originated by anyone but themselves, or their situation.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs confirms this statement through psychology by stating that a person's motivation is derived from a hierarchy of human needs, and that a person can only be motivated to achieve the next level of needs if the needs below it are met. So, if a person's **motive** is that they want to be able to respected by themselves and others, then we can assume that their physiological needs have been met, but their need for esteem has not.  Because of this implication, a manager can create a culture in which an employee can fulfill their desire to be respected through acknowledgement, perks, and raises, and in doing so catalyze an employee's motivation, but cannot create the motivation itself.

One could argue, however, that a manager does have the ability to create needs for the employee, and in turn create motivation.  By, for example, threatening to fire an employee if they do not perform at a given level.  While this would, in theory, cause the employee to be motivated to fulfill their need for job security, it would only spark motivation in the employee if their physiological, esteem, and social needs were met.  The problem with this method is that the threats would take away from their esteem, change their motive to one that fulfills their esteem, and then be demotivated because of threatening culture that they work.  So, as a result of trying to create a need for job security within an employee the manager that made the threats has effectively stymied the motivation that the employee already had.

SoW Response:

Hey Ellie,

I definitely agree with most of what you are saying. But when you said employees can only motivate themselves, I don't necessarily disagree, but, I don't completely agree either..

While I do think that motivation comes from within, I don't think that creating motivation is something that someone necessarily **does.**Rather, I think our motivation stems directly from whatever our desires are, whether they be in the form of wants or needs.  It is the strength of our desires that correlate with our level of motivation.  So, if an employee sort of wants to make more money, they will be sort of motivated to get a raise and sort of motivated to work harder.  However, if that employee **really**wants to go on a week-long European vacation in a couple of years, but needs to make more money to do that, then that person will be ***really***motivated to go on that vacation.

My point is, it is true that a manager cannot create the motivation the employee has to go on a vacation, but neither can the employee -- they want what they want.

But, what an employee or good manager can do is use the motivation that the employee has to go on vacation to increase their productivity.  If the atmosphere at work implies that hard work will lead to a raise, then the hard work will essentially lead to going on their dream vacation.  However, if the atmosphere at work is that hard work lead to more hard work, but no raise, then you have an employee who is motivated, but not motivated to work.

This is why managers' performance is usually measured by what their employee's achieve, and the best managers are the ones that create an environment that links productivity and hard work to each employee's individual motives.