Title:
How To Manage The Problem Manager

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Summary:
There are too many managers who do not understand what management is about.
Despite what many may imagine, management is not about working hard; it is about
working easy

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Article Body:
It is not a rare occurrence to find people in the wrong job or profession. One
reason could be that they just love the social attributes of the job. Some are
in the job because they have not been able to get anything better. Others may be
on a job because it is the "family business", and they feel compelled to follow
it. Many others begin a work history with the first job they can get and just
stay in that industry forever. Your problem manager is defined as a product of
one or a combination of the foregoing motives.

Left to his devices, the problem manager can significantly decrease production
and staff morale, and contribute greatly to cost increase - quite the opposite
of what most company objectives are about. The problem manager can make a large
company an unpleasant place to work, and will almost certainly destroy a small
company. He may not be quite so difficult to spot. The classical example is the
individual, who has the general impression that the entire world rests on his
shoulder, and will come crashing down to pieces, if he is not more efficient
than he presently is. In the budding stages, he may appear as the supervisor who
constantly berates and intimidates his subordinates; the team leader who
constantly creates division within his team instead of harmony; the manager who
condescends to talk to the individuals in his group but never listens to their
inputs; the manager who considers self as better than everyone else, and makes
sure that everyone else knows this; the manager, who would "get the job done
even if has to do it by himself." And in their drive to achieve their very
personal goals, they ignore or overlook other people in the organisation.

There are too many managers who do not understand what management is about.
Despite what many may imagine, management is not about working hard; it is about

working easy. An Unofficial Handbook of Management gives the following as the chief attributes of a true manager:
* Likes not doing anything
* Has no trouble telling others what to do
* Fascinated by work - likes to sit and watch work for hours
* Likes sweating the small stuff
* Always been something of a loner
* Enjoy having people despise him just for doing his job
This perhaps looks like an extract from the CV of a loafer, but the fact, which it seeks to express, is that management is not about working hard, but assisting a team to use their individual strengths more effectively.

It may not be quite easy to use a rule of thumb to identify a problem manager without creating the impression of a corporate witch hunting exercise. But there are several ways to make a tidy investigation, which will leave no one in doubt of the objectives. Quite often all that a senior manager may need to do is talk to the junior staff. Many employees will often seek a sympathetic ear to their complaints. If they are not talking, there may exist a larger problem of their distrust of senior management - or just their fear of their supervisors. Talking to the clients of the company could reveal a lot about the strengths and weakness of the managers in a company. Still a lot more can be revealed by looking at the overhead costs of the company. Overheard increase, which is not linked, to increase in productivity in a department should alert to a problem. For the same reason, staff turnover - when one group has more people quitting (or retiring) than others; when there have been instances where several individuals from the same unit have left the company in a short period of time; when one department has higher overtime costs than the others; when the employees in a particular section have been using up all their vacation and more of their sick days than the average - there is usually a problem manager in charge.

Yet it may be a lot easier to find the problem manager than to correct him. Except the individual has suddenly inherited the family business, they are unlikely to have got where they are without being good at something. If they weren't good at some particular facet of the company, they would quite certainly have been fired long ago. It is important therefore to be able to assess the value of the manager in question to the company and weigh it against their cost to the company. If the manager has increased productivity, by fifteen percent over the past year, stakeholders in the company may wish to overlook the fact that the turnover rate in that department is higher than average. However, if the books show that the cost of sale has increased by ten percent during the same period, because of increased training costs, payment to employment

agencies, sick leave costs, and increased overtime, stakeholders will be very much concerned. It is important to quantify the impact of every manager's performance in monetary terms - or in terms directly related to the objectives of the organisation.

The action of top management with respect to a problem manager will depend on the circumstances. Coaching or advanced training can be recommended. The individual might be transferred to a position with less responsibility for people. Again, it must be observed that many problem managers are a result of company policy. Perhaps the goals set for the individual are unreachable, which has caused their management style; and should be adjusted. Lack of motivation is one other fault in company policy, which may produce a problem manager. If management is not sensitive to the skills of employees, resulting in people being placed in positions in which their ability to perform is not stimulated, one can correctly guess the result. A dreamer should for instance be put in charge of creative tasks rather than the accounting. The detail-oriented person should be put in charge of tasks with more structure rather in strategic planning. And, an introverted loner is not likely to go very far in customer service.

Whatever the action taken, it is important to document and quantify the measurements that are used to determine how the problem manager is hurting the company. Intangible faults should not be addressed. True bottom line impacts should be demonstrated by the use of overhead expenses as well as direct costs. The same measurements should be used to quantify the benefit to the company when the action taken, resolves the problem. An honestly implemented manager reorientation policy has the ability to produce more productive satisfied managers. And when this is achieved, the big picture - achieving greater profitability, becomes much clearer.