

Leading Causes of Under-Management

The Under-Management Epidemic, by Bruce Tulgan

The individual manager is the most important factor in every case of under-management, and the leading causes of under-management include the following:

1. Lack of Time and/or Resources.

- Most managers struggle to balance their management responsibilities with their own job tasks. Management responsibilities receive a small percentage of each manager's time.
- The number of employees officially reporting to each supervisor (span of control) is increasing, which puts on a strain on the limited amount of time managers are able to devote to management responsibilities.
- Most managers have a growing list of administrative duties and paperwork related to management. A large percentage of time is devoted to management responsibilities instead of one-to-one communication with direct reports.
- Most managers are working with tight budgets and have limited flexibility with financial and non-financial resources.

2. False "Nice Guy" Syndrome.

Some managers think that empowerment means that direct reports own their work and make their own decisions. As a result, these managers:

- Refuse to accept responsibility for the authority and influence that comes with their position.
- Resist making clear statements about performance requirements, standard operating procedures, direction, feedback on performance (praise or criticism), guidance for improvement, or the distribution of rewards and detriments.

3. Lack of Skill.

Most managers do not receive enough training in the best techniques of effective supervision. As a result, most managers:

- Develop their own sub-optimal management style and management techniques, which become ingrained over time as strong habits.
- Have difficulty learning new techniques and developing a more effective management style.

4. Fear.

Many managers are afraid of the potential consequences if they attempt to take a highly-engaged approach with direct reports.

The top five fears managers have about being highly engaged are:

- The manager will receive no tangible benefit from the extra time and energy invested in managing direct reports.
- Direct reports might experience and/or express negative feelings (anger, insult, dislike, derision, fear, sadness, betrayal, etc.).
- Direct reports might require the manager to engage in difficult conversations (refuse to cooperate, resist direction, argue, be silent, or use a loud voice and/or harsh words).
- Direct reports might seek revenge against the manager (foot-dragging, badmouthing, quitting, sabotage, complaints, lawsuits, etc.).
- Direct reports might impose expectations or demands upon the manager that he/she will be unwilling or unable to meet.