

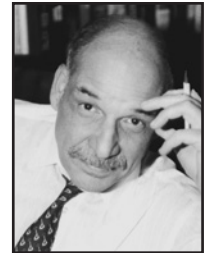
Member's Quarterly

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President's Message

What makes a great manager these days?

Some things never change



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President

I like to review the lists that organizations develop to try and help managers identify and manage the challenges of the future. I find it interesting to see what they identify as new issues because most times they are just the same old issues dressed up in different language. Maybe the pace of change in a particular area has increased and there are always challenges related to technology, but the fundamentals have not changed and what made a good manager twenty or thirty years ago would still help a manager be great today.

On my list those basics would include competence, honesty and a sense of fairness that might even be called justice. They also need the ability and desire to lead from the front rather than being a follower and the capacity to communicate the mission of the organization to the people they are entrusted to manage.

The competence question is fairly straightforward, although I wish that some individuals and organizations would do a better job of self-identification and weeding out when it comes to who gets appointed as managers. Far too many people don't actually want to lead. Even more get pushed into roles that they are not ready for or end up there without the support and training they require.

When it comes to honesty and fairness, you either have these or you don't. Any organization that would have a manager at any level that does not possess these qualities is just looking for trouble. These employees will either steal your time or money or they will inspire rebellion in the ranks because they pick favourites or create inequities that will erode the organization from the inside out.

The ability and desire to lead is still probably the most important management quality that I would seek out in a manager for my organization. In my view, this along with the ability to communicate is really what separates the great managers from the good, the leaders from the managers. They always want the ball and always want to handle the puck when the game goes into overtime. They are the people whom you can trust to get the job done and the ones trusted by the troops to lead them into battle.

At the end of the day, if I could have just one quality to add to any manager today, yesterday or tomorrow, I would give them the capacity to understand and communicate the vision of the company to all the people below them. To be able to deliver a sense of clarity and purpose to employees might be the key to not just their success, but to yours as well. The great management guru Warren Bennis once said: "Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."

Those are my thoughts on the challenges of the modern manager. What would you add to the list?

Brian Pascal is President of IPM [Institute of Professional Management].