



## The Work of a Manager

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The manager's role provides a critical foundation for getting work done in the organisation. Work is authorised through the line of management, from the most senior role of the Managing Director, who authorises the strategy and business plan, through to the front line manager who authorises the work plan and task assignments of each team member. The manager is the authorised and accountable representative of the organisation to the direct report employee, and therefore has the most significant impact on the employee's effectiveness in the role.

This paper describes the critical People work of a manager. The People work enables the delivery of the business outcomes, and so it is important that an organisation values the People work necessary to enable the operation to perform optimally and to build for the future sustainability of the business. If there are 350 employees in the organisation, then there are 349 manager-employee relationships. The quality of each of these relationships, called the individual relationship, is fundamental to achieving the organisation's business goals while at the same time supporting the employee to work to their full potential.

The manager has role authority to carry out their accountabilities. This means that the organisation assigns the manager with clear accountabilities and authorities to make decisions relating to his or her work unit, and this is recognised and supported by the organisation. However, for a manager to be able to deliver on his or her managerial accountabilities, the manager must also develop personally earned authority in relation to his or her direct subordinates. This authority is earned by their by their ability to add value to the work of their subordinates, by their adherence to the systems and practices of the organisation, and by their personal behaviour and conduct in creating a work environment of mutual trust and fairness.

A manager is defined as a person in a role who is accountable for:

- Their own personal effectiveness in their managerial role
- The work output and personal effectiveness of their direct reports
- Setting direction and leading them so that each team member is capable and willing to follow in the direction set
- Continuously improving the systems and processes that impact their work.

Although the definition is a single word, the term 'manager' includes managerial leadership because leadership is a specific accountability of managerial roles. Effective leadership is the hundred things a manager does every day and every week to engage their team members to achieve their willing commitment to follow the direction set. Role authority therefore, is necessary but insufficient to achieve optimal and sustainable business results over time. It is the balance of role authority and personally earned authority that mobilises the team and lifts their work to achieve excellence in team outcomes.



For employees to thrive and grow in their current role, the manager needs to develop a relationship with the employee so that the relationship between them is robust, trusting, with two way communication and focusing on achieving agreed objectives. In order to establish and maintain this individual relationship, the manager needs to pay attention to the following core practices.

## **Set workplace conditions for employee effectiveness**

The manager is accountable for the employee's measurable outputs, as well as their personal effectiveness. This means making sound judgements about how well the employee meets their objectives. It takes into account the degree of difficulty the employee faced in doing the work, the quality of their thinking and decision-making, and the degree to which they were able to utilise all their capability to achieve the desired outcomes.

In establishing a work environment that enables the employee to reach to their full potential, the manager will work to ensure the following:

- Set clear direction so that the employee has a clear line of sight from the organisation's strategy and business plan to their own personal role objectives. This provides important context for the employee's work, enabling them to prioritise their own work effort and effect sound decisions around their work. A manager's key role here is to make meaning for the employee, translating the wider business context to their work. Setting good context means that the manager has the employee fully engaged in the work, with real purpose and commitment and a sense of joy in doing the work.

- Provide a clear purpose for the team, and for each role, and accurately identify accountabilities, authorities, how each role relates to others in delivering their work along the work processes, so that each employee has an understanding of how their role delivers its core accountabilities and how it adds value to the business.
- Accurately select for the role by paying attention to all the elements of employee capability required for full competence in the role:
  - application of skilled knowledge
  - the level of mental processing ability necessary to manage the complexity of work of the role
  - the degree to which the employee values the nature of work of the role, such that they can apply the necessary energy to fully commit to the role and
  - the personal characteristics, such as the ability to maintain strong emotional control in difficult circumstances
- Engage with the employee to identify gaps between the capability requirements for the role and the actual applied capability and agree, implement and continually review a learning and development plan to address the gaps
- Integrate the work of each of the reporting roles to deliver a good collective team output, making judgements about the appropriate balance of resources, time, and priorities, so that each individual can adjust their own work balance to meet changing needs.
- Assign work to the employee so that the employee can deliver the core components of the role but also to provide room in the assignment so that the employee can reach to the full complexity of the role. The manager must then appropriately monitor the work to ensure it is on track and engage in two-way, open and constructive feedback. This brings the manager closer to understanding the true nature of work, the employee's applied capability, and the workplace issues that may impact negatively on the employee in carrying out the work.
- All these practices provide a pathway for effective performance management, enabling the manager to recognise dependable and outstanding work, and take productive, corrective action in a timely way. It is under these circumstances that the manager is then in a position to make fair, trust-inducing judgements about the overall personal effectiveness and the work output of the employee, and fair decisions about merit rewards.

- The manager's work in relation to the employee is focussed on setting conditions for the employee's success in the current role. However, the nature of their working together provides good opportunity for the manager to provide valuable input to the Manager-once-Removed's work for building the organisation's capability for the future by:
  - Recommending the employee's capability to perform work at the next level of work, or a different role at the same level of work.
  - Recommending and implementing the career development plan agreed with the Manager-once-Removed to develop the employee for future roles.

## **Build an effective team**

The manager is the authorised 'cross-over' manager for the team of direct reports, and therefore is the person who is accountable to build an effective team. Effective teamworking needs to address both the social and technical processes to ensure productive engagement around problem-solving and delivering optimal solutions. This means the manager needs to be clear about his or her decisions on the task purpose and scope, the issues to be worked on and the work plan to achieve the outcome. An effective manager takes accountability for the outcome, for making it clear to the team members their accountability to contribute to the process, and for ensuring a productive review of the overall team effectiveness.

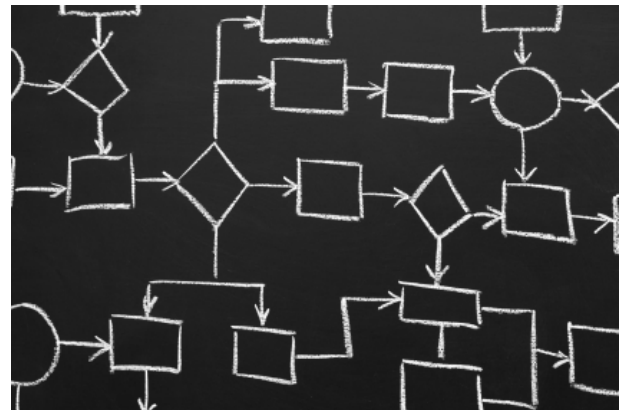
When the work processes and role accountabilities are not aligned, the manager has a role to identify the areas of conflict, raise the issues within the team, and work the team to ensure that the overlaps and gaps are identified and addressed. As cross-over manager, the manager thus clarifies the context for the work, decides the work process and assures the collaboration and effectiveness of the team members working within the process. Team members are accountable to "keep their word", that is, to comply within the systems and processes and to do their best to deliver as their manager would wish them to. Managers can expect demonstration of this level of collaboration, but cannot expect employees to sort out the problems that are outside each of their own role accountabilities. In such a circumstance the manager must align the work of the team members to ensure a free flow of work.



If the work processes stretch outside the manager's unit, the manager must work collaboratively with their own manager and their peers to understand and analyse the issue and where a decision needs to be made that is outside their respective authority, to escalate to the next level of manager to ensure resolution.

## **Establish, implement and maintain effective systems**

In adding value to the work of the team, the manager needs to be able to view the unit's issues for effectiveness from a whole system perspective. The manager needs to ensure appropriate design, deployment of systems and processes to continuously improve the work of the team and so that all employees understand their role in adhering to the systems.



Where the systems are cross-organisation, the manager must ensure he or she collaborates as a team member to represent his or her own team's input to the system design. The immediate manager must take accountability for the implementation of all systems and processes in their team, exercising leadership to define the changes in roles and processes, and the expectations of performance. This leadership work ensures the manager retains full accountability for the successful implementation and improvement of company systems in their team. Where improvement is necessary, the manager will identify the appropriate issues, ensure they are raised with the system owner and follow through on the changes necessary for implementation.

The manager shapes the behaviour and performance of the team and through his or her consistent actions, builds mutual trust in the team, thus directly impacting the well being of the individual at work and their ability to grow and develop in their role. It is the role of most significance for the employee and its judicious exercise of managerial judgement directly moves the organisation closer to aligning its business goals with the employee needs and aspirations.