



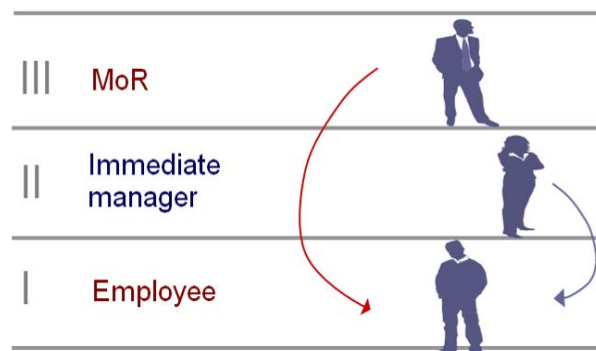
The Work of the Manager-once-Removed Role

By Sheila Deane, PeopleFit Australasia, 2009

The Manager-once-Removed (MoR) role is fundamental to establishing the organisation conditions for trust and fairness. The key focus of the MoR role is to:

- Ensure quality of managerial leadership effectiveness of the subordinate managers, including effective structure and role relationships and the effective team working of all subordinate teams across the function.
- Ensure fair treatment of the Subordinate-once-Removed (SoR) employees, which includes a clear system of grievance and appeal and the fair and equitable application of all systems, policies and practices across all the subordinate units.
- Building capability for the future, including assessing the current potential of SoRs and matching their individual career aspirations with organisational needs, and in mentoring them through their career development plan.

The MoR is key to improving an organisation's overall effectiveness and to attending to the sustainability issues of longer term development. The MoR role, through its management of teams of teams, supports an organisation's ability to respond quickly and effectively to changes in its external environment. The MoR role is accountable to build SoR confidence in their fair and equitable treatment and longer term development in the organisation. As the role spans three levels of the organisation, its complexity lies in the MoR managing their own direct report managers effectively and in a supportive manner as well as maintaining an appropriate relationship with the SoRs.



Manager-Once-Removed Accountabilities

Builds Capability	Ensures Fair Treatment	Ensures Quality of Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings a wider perspective of the organisation to identify future opportunities and role requirements • Designs structure at SoR level • Assesses potential of SoR for current and future roles • Decides promotion/demotion/dismissal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides objectivity for SoR decisions • Ensures consistent application of policies across the unit • Decides appeal outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links vertical and horizontal role relationships to ensure integration of the work, collaboration and alignment • Provides coaching to direct report manager on their leadership effectiveness • Shapes the workplace culture and sets expectations of behaviour of all managers in the unit • Reviews managerial decisions of direct reports as part of performance assessment

This role starts at Level III in the organisation and has a key organisation and leadership accountability for the following three core areas.

1. Ensuring the Quality of Leadership Provided by Direct Reports

This is critical because the MoR may have several managers reporting to him or her, each accountable for their own teams. Effective team working at all three levels is necessary to ensure consistency in application of managerial leadership principles.

How does the MoR do this?

- Firstly, in order to ensure consistency across the whole MoR unit, the MoR needs to provide good context for the unit's work by defining purpose, key accountabilities and authorities and by setting direction through agreed objectives and clear tasks. This information should be shared face-to-face within the unit. This context can then be reinforced by all managers across the unit as they manage day-to-day with their direct report teams.
- Secondly, the MoR is accountable to recommend the organisational structure and relationships required to achieved the assigned objectives and tasks of his or her unit, such as the number of SoR roles, the functional areas of the work to be undertaken in each SoR role (and therefore the grade and pay band within the level for each SoR role) as well as agreeing to appointment of each SoR.

- Thirdly, the MoR is accountable to support and enable his or her managers to do their managerial leadership work by the following:
 - providing a clear set of leadership standards, principles and behaviours
 - providing coaching and development in the application of these principles and behaviours
 - providing both positive and negative feedback on the leader's effectiveness in managing their teams
 - reviewing the decisions of direct report manager to ensure consistency with the values and standards of the whole function
 - modelling the principles every day in all his or her actions and decisions
 - ensuring policies, procedures, systems and processes are both authorised and productive, and that these systems are properly implemented, controlled, audited and sustained or reviewed for improvement
 - ensuring calibration with direct report manager team of key judgments and decisions relating to work performance, career potential and salary at the levels below, thus ensuring consistency of approach across the unit
 - supporting the manager's authority to veto the appointment of a subordinate to that manager for 'good cause'
 - where a manager decides to initiate removal of a subordinate from a role, it is the accountability of the MoR to decide on the re-positioning of the person to another role. This may include initiating discussion with the MoR's own manager about moving the SoR elsewhere in the organisation, or removal from the organisation
 - reviewing the manager's recommendation for dismissal, and making a decision
 - ensuring that accountabilities and authorities across the unit and the organisation are defined and implemented so that all related parties understand their role and are committed to enabling the processes and role accountabilities

"Getting close" to the manager's leadership work is thus a critical component of the role. This can be achieved by identifying opportunities to observe 'at right angles' the managerial leadership work being performed by the manager such as:

- Scheduling attendance at the manager's own regular team business meetings where informed is shared and exchanged
- Scheduling attendance at special meetings where the manager may be giving and getting feedback to several levels of employees on a particular issue e.g. a safety incident; results of a survey, feedback on extraordinary issues such as change of management

- Scheduling attendance at project team meetings as appropriate such as project review meetings, close-out meetings (what worked well and what didn't) and at specific problem solving meetings
- Getting feedback on audits and reviews on systems used by managers and their teams
- Having regular 1-1 meetings with the manager where a standard topic is the effectiveness and capability of their team and delivery of the team objectives
- Reviewing recommendations and decisions made by managers, for example how the manager deals with difficult issues and decisions relating to performance improvement, or disciplinary action. The MoR obtains valuable information about their wisdom through the manager's judgments during team calibration exercises for performance reviews, talent pool management and succession planning, and in the quality and nature of feedback from managers as input to the SoR career assessment process.

This observation process requires the MoR to be constantly on the alert as to the state of organisational health of the unit and specifically to the quality of the employee relationship between manager and their employee. When observing the manager doing their managerial work the MoR must always reinforce the VARI authorities and leadership role of the manager. Any coaching or correction of the manager should be carried out personally in a one-to-one situation.

2. Ensuring Fair Treatment at the SoR Level

A manager's judgment of the personal effectiveness of a subordinate will inevitably generate feelings which lie between trust and confidence or mistrust and lack of confidence in the manager. This may lead to a sense of being either fairly or unfairly treated. A manager's judgment about the subordinate's personal effectiveness will have a profound impact on that subordinate personally as well as upon their sense of security and specifically on judgments about their pay.



There must therefore be provision for a process which will ensure that the manager's judgment and treatment of the subordinate can be formally reviewed. This must come from the MoR and the latter's manager must also be notified of a formal grievance review. It is the accountability of the MoR in the review process to be on the alert for and to be aware of circumstances where one of his or her own immediate subordinate managers is treating one or more of that manager's subordinates unfairly, for whatever reason. Examples of this may be a manager who victimises an employee because he or she does not 'like' their personal style.

In such a circumstance the MoR must investigate the situation and straighten the problem out with a formal coaching session with the manager. To the extent that the MoR carries this out effectively there is no need for invoking the formal fair treatment system because the problem will be relieved through the resulting, specific change in the manager's behaviour and treatment of the subordinate. If this does not occur or is not possible the additional safeguard is the formal review process.

This process is outlined in the related Fair Treatment system and occurs when a subordinate believes he or she is being unfairly or unjustly treated. This does not include dissatisfaction with policy issues, as these must be taken through the policy review process. When related to feelings of unfair treatment, it gives the subordinate authority to discuss this with their manager and then to refer the issue to the MoR for review and final decision on the issue. In this circumstance it is important for the MoR to first speak to the subordinate and the manager separately before talking to them together.

3. Building Capability for the Future

The MoR is accountable for ensuring that there is a pool of talent among SoRs sufficient for meeting future company capability needs. They are also accountable for the Career Development Plan for each of the SoRs. In order to meet this accountability the MoR must have specific authorities in relation to SoRs directly, and not via the immediate managers.

These authorities are:

- **Veto selection** of an unacceptable candidate for an SoR role. The MoR's veto is focused on ensuring the manager has followed the recruitment process, the selection contributes to the SoR pool of talent, and is consistent with the unit and the company's values.
- **Recommend selection**, where this is part of the process of development of the talent pool of people for roles at the manager's own level. The manager's authority to veto selection still applies.
- **Assess potential for future roles and decide development plan for future roles.** The MoR will consult with the manager on the personal effectiveness of the SoR and ask for his or her opinion on potential, but the MoR is accountable to take this and other input into account to make a decision. Only the MoR can realistically decide to promote a SoR to the level of the SoR's manager. The MoR also conducts a career assessment discussion with the SoR at least annually. This involves discussion about the judgment of the SoR's potential and agreement with the manager and SoR on the SoR's development plan. It is expected that the MoR and immediate manager will discuss the development plan before the MoR finalises it with the SoR and manager.

The Development Plan that is authorised by the MoR is a serious investment by the organisation. As this development is beyond the current role requirement, the available financial and people resources are likely to be scarce. The MoR must balance with career development expenditure with other important business investments and resources.

The MoR role spans 3 organisational strata and so the MoR needs to be proactive and consistent in their efforts in getting to know their SoRs well enough to make important judgments about their future. However, they must be both tactful and skilled in ensuring they never weaken or interfere with the direct relationship between SoR and the immediate manager.

In order to ensure that all MoR actions in relation to the SoR are trust inducing and perceived as fair, the MoR should **not**:

- Engage formally (e.g. schedule a meeting) with the SoR without advising the manager that they are doing so and why;
- Discuss the SoR's manager with the SoR unless a formal review is being investigated.
- Get involved with the manager's own work such as task assignment and coaching for personal effectiveness in current role
- Interfere with any of the manager's VARI authorities

A typical problem MoRs face, particularly when they are newly appointed, is that the SoR raises managerial leadership issues with the MoR. In such a circumstance the MoR should advise the SoR to take the issues back to the manager and engage in the appropriate manager-subordinate discussions about issues impacting the employee's personal effectiveness. In doing so, the MoR is coaching the SoR in how to conduct themselves in a trust inducing manner and reinforcing the appropriate role of the manager in exercising their managerial leadership accountabilities. The MoR should advise the manager of this discussion and if appropriate explore in detail the problem and coach the manager in the MoRs expectations of performance needs and aspirations.

The MoR is a fundamental building block in establishing the culture of the three-level unit, authorising and enabling structure across the unit so that each person has a value-adding role, bringing together teams and aligning them to accountabilities and processes, and by setting the overall direction for the unit. It requires wisdom, a high level of understanding of how organisations work and an exceptional ability to manage cross team working relationships.