

EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES: Integrating critical/analytical skill with conceptual/emotional thought

UCSD EPSE-LAMP Student
Research Assignment 2004-05;
Findings

THE ASSIGNMENT

- Two challenges to select from:
 - Confronting performance/political issues
 - Converting incomplete direction into action
- Interview at least two managers with a positive reputation addressing the stated challenge
- Document
 - “Identify behaviors and actions that appear to bring together both sets of strengths into an effective management style”
- Provide summative insights

INFORMATION RECEIVED

- Fifty-eight papers
- Twenty-five companies

FINDINGS

- Model for managerial success combines:
 - Professional respect of employees, peers, customers – comes from technical expertise
 - Personal respect of employees, peers, supervisors – comes from (positive) interpersonal behaviors
- There are effective ways to deal with “people” challenges using an analytical mindset (and many managers prefer to use that approach), but it doesn’t have to be that way (many managers learn to use complimentary “organic” approaches)

FINDINGS

- Common themes in dealing with performance/political issues:
 - Don't avoid it, address it head on
 - Focus on teams, not individual heroes
 - Focus on overarching goals
 - Focus on what the customer needs
 - Lots of listening, involve others in the solution
 - Stay with it, don't give up
 - Personal courage

FINDINGS

- Common themes in turning general direction into productive action:
 - Don't wait for clarity, do your homework, go to the source and clarify together
 - Create clear and achievable goals
 - Over-communicate; up, down, sideways
 - Work in groups, hire bright people, share and delegate responsibility
 - Learn from your mistakes; be willing to change the plan

TIPS

- Have people work in groups of three
- Meet 100% of your personal commitments
- Question facts, not people
- Change work assignments to help people accept/adapt to business change
- Use a bonus reserve, give notes of appreciation
- Learn from bad experiences
- Select team members and assign their roles carefully
- Be willing to be influenced in order to have influence
- Surround yourself with managers who are good where you are weak
- Build process, not personal, solutions
- Use the Human Resources department
- Break complex things down into “bite-size” pieces
- Find an approach to balancing “hard and soft” that fits with your personal/professional style
- Select team members and assign their roles thoughtfully

TRAPS

- Letting personal relationships and teambuilding interests cloud your judgment regarding performance
- Spending so much time motivating, communicating and listening that you let other important items slip (or burnout) – time management
- Accommodating every concern leads to no real change
- Being passionate about something to in order to motivate can be perceived as being biased about a situation (not objective)
- Trying to make a team or relationship work when you suspect it never will
- Aspiring to technical excellence can starve team cohesion
- Thinking email to communicate is good enough