WHY DO TECHNICAL EXPERTS STRUGGLE IN THE TRANSITION TO MANAGEMENT?

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PTI

BERGAILA & ASSOCIATES, INC.
Contract & Direct Engineering Staffing
Our hope for this morning

You will leave with…

• At least one insight or tool you can apply back at work
• At least one new connection
• A commitment to continue to impact how engineers transition to management
Why is the choice made to promote the best technical experts into managerial roles?

- Retention
- Pay
- Recognition
Management Progression

Hands-on & Task-Oriented Skills

Management/Leadership Skills

Staff  Lead  Supervisor  Manager  Director  VP & Above

Stages of Responsibility
No Control

Area of Influence

(+)

Area of Control

(-)
What fantasies do engineers have of the manager’s role?

• Less day-to-day pressure, fewer deadlines
• More money $$
• Less work
• And more...
What expectations does the company have of the manager’s role?

• Deliver the goods on time and on budget
• Keep the customer happy
• Deliver a quality job
• Perform as well in a managerial role as s/he has as a technical expert
• And more...
What typically happens when a good engineer is promoted into a management role?

**The early days**
- Handed the keys
- Immediately become overloaded
- Heightened reliance on relationships

**Reality**
- Putting out fires
- Longer work days and higher stress
- Less direct contact with engineers

**Pressure**
- More time spent in-office
- Grumbling staff
- Mounting problems

**Dealing with the issues**
- Projects behind schedule
- Increased staff attrition
- More time spent on hiring
- “What the heck did I get myself into?”
Where does the breakdown occur?

• Engineer expectations of the role and goals for themselves

• Well-articulated company expectations of the role don’t exist and there is no alignment with the engineer’s expectation of the role

• There is no structure to create success in the new role including pre- and ongoing training and coaching
The biggest challenges experienced by newly promoted managers

• Working longer hours

• Lack of mentoring

• Working through others to complete tasks, rather than doing it themselves

• Many roles or hats, could no longer focus on just one task

• Increase in pressure and stress as related to new responsibilities
The biggest challenges experienced by newly promoted managers (cont’d)

• The need for better relationship skills
• The need for training and better insight into the position
• There always seem to be issues without resources
• Not perceived as ‘one of the guys’ any longer
• Miss the hands-on approach
• Increased decision-making process
The biggest challenges experienced by newly promoted managers (cont’d)

• Motivating the workforce

• How to balance and prioritize tasks and the continuous interruptions

• Always attending meaningless meetings

• The jealousy and feeling of resentment by your fellow technical specialists once you have moved ahead of them

• FEELING ALONE

“Stepping Out From a Technical Job and Leaping Into Management (A Dissertation), Martin K. Younts, 2006
What is The Impact On...

• The individual?
• The organization?
Solutions

On the...

- Individual level
- Departmental level
- Organizational level
Solutions

• *Individual Level*, Coaching and Mentoring

• *Departmental Level*, Review reporting requirements, and make adjustments that promote success in the role

• *Organizational Level*, HR policies and programs

Additional examples are in a handout in your packet
Tips to help the transition process

• Continually identify high potentials
• Work with HR to create a development plan for high potentials
• Provide opportunities for high potentials to exercise leadership in committees, project work etc.
• Create clear job description for the managerial role
• Meet with the newly promoted manager to track progress, and discuss challenges
Tips to help the transition process (cont’d)

- Make time available for the new manager to attend conferences, training, and receive coaching
- Provide admin. and technical support
- Create opportunities for new managers to interact with each other and with seasoned managers
- Review management ratio (span of control)
- Normalize the transition, it is difficult but rewarding in the end.
Discussion
Thank You