

# Management Development A Strategic Direction

*By*

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Many managers are promoted to leadership roles because they exhibited strong performance as workers. The shift from being a worker and regular employee to one of a manager who is expected to lead their employees can be a difficult one, however, and many new managers struggle to succeed. Far too often organizations provide little or no formal developmental opportunities for its new managers and no continuous development programs for existing managers.

An organization's managers are its direct link to employees. They have a strong influential role and impact on employee performance—*the people who most influence your customers decisions as to whether they ever shop with you again*. You are competing in very uncertain times. You're faced with stiff competition, employee turnover, and challenged by how to increase customer loyalty and profitability. The role of every manager in your organization requires more than ever before strong interpersonal and leadership skills.

## **Management Development Barriers**

Too often management development is infrequent, and poorly organized. Management development training that is offered, typically is not part of a formal program linked to goals and long-range objectives.

Another barrier is “manager resistance” to developmental opportunities. They may be reluctant to admit “weaknesses” or have a fear of failure. Try positioning management development as part of their career path and growth plan.

Perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome is accountability. It is crucial to measure the impact and effectiveness of management development initiatives. There should be clear and specific objectives when deciding on a management development program. To properly evaluate the effectiveness of your management development program, measure the impact that development has on the organization's goals and objectives.

## **What Should Management Development Focus On?**

Today's managers need a broad range of skills such as leadership, supervisory and communication skills. A solid understanding of the supermarket industry and your organization's structure is needed as well, with a clear understanding of the culture, business philosophy, policies and procedures of your organization.

There are numerous management development resources that you can access: university courses, seminars, professional associations, on-line courses, training on CD-ROM, participating on task forces, company provided programs, and case studies are just a few examples of how managers can have access to developmental learning.

## **Steps to Take in Establishing Management Development Training Programs**

- Assess where you are currently. Are new managers offered developmental training? Is there a current program for existing managers? Ask managers to evaluate their available options and what they need to learn more about to be more effective leaders.
- Take a look at your workforce and project your management needs into the future. An important element to management development and a key to ensuring strong leadership is having a succession plan. Determine the gaps between current skills and what you will need in the future. This will provide a snapshot that will indicate areas of potential weaknesses and vulnerability.
- Determine existing skill level through standardized testing/assessment instruments and questionnaires. Compare the existing skill level with future managerial needs and then identify the gaps to pinpoint management development needs.
- Next, align management development training with your organizations strategic plan. The key here is to match the needs of the organization with the management skill level and select the appropriate training programs.
- Recognize that management development is an on-going process, not a one time event.
- Be honest with employees about their future with the company and need for development. Provide feedback for positive change to occur.

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