Transitioning to Management

The Ups and Downs
Rachelle Abbott, AICP
STEP, Inc.

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Agenda

- Aspects of Management
  - Rachelle
  - Susan
  - Ed

- Small Group Discussion
  - Challenges
  - Ideas

- Full Group Discussion
  - Bring back a challenge and potential solutions
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• Rachelle Abbott
  - Chief Operations Officer at Lycoming-Clinton Counties Commission for Community Action (STEP), Inc.
  - Oversee managers/directors of seven (7) programs a total of nine (9) staff that manages 234 within a total staff of 282.

• Rewards
  - Ensuring that STEP is a great place to work and through this fulfilling our mission to engage diverse individuals, families, and communities in the pursuit of social and economic success.

• Challenges
  - Continual Personnel Items (Often Multi-Faceted and Time Consuming)
  - Balancing Daily Duties with ‘Personnel Crisis’

• Solutions
  - Start with hiring - personality and ‘right fit’ is important
  - Constant Communication (Never Enough... )
  - Strong Human Resources Department on the same page as Administration
  - Always get legal option to back up tough decisions
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• Susan Elks
  o Planning Services Director at Chester County Planning Commission
  o Oversee a staff of 7.5 within a department of 30+

• Rewards
  o Enabling others to do good work

• Challenges
  o Sharing time
  o Getting technical work done

• Solutions
  o Block time in your calendar
  o Close your door
  o Listen
  o Be fully where you are - multitasking is not your friend
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• Ed LeClear
  o Planning & Community Development Director at Borough of State College
  o Oversee a staff of six (6) direct reports within a department of twelve (12)
  o Previously with Cumberland County Redevelopment Authority: managed seven (7) direct reports within a department of ten (10)

• Rewards
  o Moving the ball forward. Transforming plans into real change on the ground
  o Helping staff grow as professionals, and (hopefully) as people who feel fulfilled by their work
  o Building an institutional reputation for integrity, forthright communication, creativity and flexibility
  o Learning how to be better!
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• Challenges

  o With a small staff, and a large portfolio, learning to balance the needs of management, while also producing at a high level
  o Moving large, complicated projects forward systematically (that are often forgotten by decisionmakers) while fighting fires daily
  o Obtaining and managing the technical resources to turn a wide-range of multi-disciplinary ideas into a reality
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- **Solutions**
  - Manage first. Produce second.
  - But, you do not need to manage as much as you think...
    - Protect (and limit) time for staff with greater needs
    - Create time to manage staff that prefer to work with minimal supervision

- **Solutions cont.**
  - Sixty hours a week, every week, kills morale. Don’t let it happen
  - Consultants take as much management time as staff, but they let you produce in ways you otherwise couldn’t
  - Create the environment to produce
    - Learn your boss’s and peer’s habits and accept them. Do not plan to produce when you know they will need you
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- Solutions
  - Spend the time to layout the long-range schedule. It will make it easier to course correct quickly when under deadlines, and reduces stress.
  - Create graphically rich work so decision makers can clearly see what is on the plate.
  - **The Hardest Lesson**: Let staff do the work that you thought it was your job (and only your job) to do.
    - Give direction up front
    - Create time for meaningful revision
Agenda

- Introductions of Participants
  - Name and where do you work?
  - Do you currently manage projects, people, both, or none?

- Small Group Discussion (30 mins)
  - Identify a participant who is going to report back for the group
  - Challenges - each person identify at least one (4 mins/person, ideally)
  - Ideas for Solutions - discuss options for each challenge identified

- Full Group Discussion (30 mins)
  - Bring back one or two difficult challenges and potential solutions to the full group for discussion
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Results from Conference Session

- The following slides were products of the interactive aspects of the conference session.
- The first slide is a collection of responses to the question “Give one example of a positive management technique you experienced, and/or use today.”
- The second slide is a collection of responses to the question “Give one example of a poor management technique that you experienced and do NOT want to emulate.”
- The remaining slides are a collection of responses from participants discussing challenging management situations and possible solutions.
A manager who was always available for questions.

Get good workers. Run with the ball—don’t micromanage.

Board having time (weekly) to consult w/ Stahl

Great. Sensible.

Being aware of morale. Little incentives: food, gatherings, etc. Being thanked and acknowledged for well-deserved good work.

Trusting staff to execute and being OK with imperfections.

Good.

Ok to make mistakes & own it. Feel protected.

Like

- Giving input that empowers employees to grow.
- Project creation.
- Skill enhancement.
- Committee participation.
- Professional training.

Good Manager

To create opportunities to prevent boredom.

- Make work meaningful.
- Help employees develop, develop skills, and enabling them to succeed.

Not your managing me.

Not asnpools + leadership development opportunities & support. Not Myers-Briggs.
Bad Manager
It is my way or the highway.

Too many meetings, nothing left to do at work

Publicly dismissing an employee

BEING DISENGAGED from staff’s work

Frustrated by meetings, own own time & off agenda.

Not correcting or listening to employees to consider solutions

asked us to approve a permit that did not go through the proper conditional use process.

Grouped together, came to items meetings rather than being the person/problem driven.

Micro-management + paranoia

Manages too micro-managed work constantly.

Tried to schedule employee review/feedback & never getting to it.

- Not communicating or prior, just through email and phone messages.

When my boss doesn’t listen to me, it makes my job harder.
Align and present political directions when it disagrees with personal/department analysis.

Co-communicate with public and professionals.

Can I defend the political decision?

Review work.
- Understanding your vs. others' roles
  - right vs delegation, face vs agent.

- Making sure leadership supports an initiative

- Dealing with Legacy Issues when arriving into agent role

- Managing coworkers that you used to be equal with prior taking manager role,
- Trade off between managing product and team
  - Don't correct their mistakes
- Managing up and down at same time
- How to evolve a heavily admin, program/organizational change
  - Communication
- Lousy staff
- Time drain | Suck
LESSONS LEARNED

- Don't be afraid to send bad work back
- Treat people as individuals... to the extent HR permits
- Say "No"
- Learn to close your door. It is okay!
- Listen