



Management 101

Are you the kind of manager who frequently sticks your neck out for your subordinates? Do your loyal, happy employees reach deadlines like clockwork? And last, are you some kind of masochist or what? Apparently you are, because your management style is just creating extra work for yourself, keeping you from fulfilling the number one management objective: getting promoted. So if you're the type of manager who gets sidetracked by quaint ideals like "making things work" or "getting results," it's time to revisit some management fundamentals.

Getting promoted – In many organizations, you can do this without having to produce any tangible deliverables—you just need to maintain the status quo while "networking" with some higher ups. However, in other organizations, you have to first make some shortsighted decisions that enhance your stature. But first, you'll need to assemble a team of empowered, capable employees—empowered to take the blame for your mistakes and capable of producing impressive-looking work for which you can take credit. And then you will have to give your managers the impression that your team is oozing from its orifices with ...

Productivity – If your project is on schedule and your employees are going home at a decent hour, that doesn't count as productivity. People don't look like they're working hard unless they're up against bleak odds—name one statue in honor of a leader who easily did what was promised. If the bleak odds don't already exist, you can create them: If your project should require eight months to complete, push the schedule ahead two months. This ensures that important steps will be cut early on to save time; for the remainder of the project your employees will then need to put in a lot of unpaid overtime redoing things, which raises your promotability stature above those "everyone-out-at-five" managers.

Meanwhile, you need to be spending time on the golf course with the right people to ensure that you're promoted before your project deadline. A year from now, a stooge needs to be solidly in your former position when the project, already four months late, self-implodes due to your early leadership.

Employee relations – Employees will whine on and on about their long hours and deteriorating family life without stopping once to consider the cost of an in-dash CD changer in the Porche you are planning to buy. But occasionally, an employee will present a legitimate concern that causes you to feel empathy and to accommodate those needs. Ignore this feeling. It leads to too much touchy-feely talk and wastes your time. It's much more efficient for you to respond with accusations of disloyalty and thinly veiled threats. When those tools don't work, give individual employees the impression they are just teetering on the brink of a promotion, so they'll think they need to stay on your good side.

Yes, employee empathy is for sissies, but to avoid mutiny you'll still need to pretend you care about their irrelevant personal lives. For example, just for the heck of it, agree to look the other way if an employee takes an extra-long lunch to attend the funeral of a spouse. Or occasionally accommodate a worker's unique circumstances, such as personally giving her a top-of-the-line laptop computer to work on between contractions while she's in the delivery room.

Employee rewards and compensation – Merit-based reward systems inspire the wrong behavior—those goody-two-shoes "self-motivated" employees can make life so hard. You can drive most of these types away with inadequate pay, leaving you with a foundation of yes-men and yes-women who would never distract you with ideas and "improvements" that draw unwanted attention to your project.

However, there will always be a few "movers and shakers" working for you. They'll provide cohesion and expertise to the team, often providing heroic efforts that boost your project's status within the organization. These people must be crushed. You don't want to spend months intentionally missing two-foot putts only to have some goody-goody obtain the favor of a "results-driven" manager.

Of course, you could just try to move up by providing superior long-term results, but then where's the fun? And what would your employees do if they had free time anyway? Have a social life? Fall in love and get married? You'd better order some extra laptops for those honeymooners.

– Lorin May

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Sponsor	Lt. Col. Joe Jarzombek 801-777-2435 DSN 777-2435 jarzombj@software.hill.af.mil
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Managing Editor	Forrest Brown 801-777-9239 DSN 777-9239 managing_editor@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Senior Editor	Sandi Gaskin 801-777-9722 DSN 777-9722 senior_editor@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Graphics and Design	Kent Hepworth 801-775-5555 ext. 3027 graphics@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Associate Editor	Lorin J. May 801-775-5555 ext. 3026 backtalk@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Editorial Assistant	Bonnie May 801-775-5555 ext. 3022 customer_service@stsc1.hill.af.mil
Features Coordinator	Heather Winward 801-775-5555 ext. 3023 features@stsc1.hill.af.mil
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