Results and Retention

The definition of an Effective Manager is to achieve results while retaining your team members.

All Manager Tools actionable guidance is based on principles for effectiveness. The most important First Principle we know is the manager's responsibility to achieve the organization's results while retaining his team members. This is ultimately how all managers are measured.

This cast introduces a periodic series of First Principles on those underlying concepts and ideas that inform our recommendations.

Outline

1. **A Manager's First Responsibility Is To Get Results**
2. **A Manager's Second Responsibility is To Retain Team Members**

Shownotes

1. A Manager's First Responsibility Is To Get Results

The role of a manager is to achieve the results the organization expects of her and her team. All other managerial rules, guidelines, protocols, policies and principles stem from this First Principle. Greatness in management cannot be achieved without decisions and behaviors that lead to results.

There are a lot of roles in our world where there are many small things that go into one's overall success. One does not have to be good at all of them, necessarily, to be considered good in the role. But when managing others in an organization, while there of course many things *to do,* accomplishing your primary objectives is the paramount measure of success.

Results are outcomes the organization needs to allow it to create whatever it delivers in the form of products and services to the society it serves. Virtually every manager will have different outcomes, different results.

A legal manager might be measured based on costs incurred per legal action, or on number of patents granted based on activities of his team. A sales manager would likely be measured on total sales of his team, or on margins achieved on those sales. A production manager might be measured on total widget output, and on quality measures per widget, and/or percentage uptime of the equipment in her portion of the assembly process.

The manager who does not achieve the results that are expected of him cannot substitute other claims to success or achievement in order to justify being considered effective. The manager who does many other things well but does not achieve results is NOT an effective manager. Many mangers attempt to argue this when they have not performed well in their primary metrics.

The classic example of this is the manager who may not achieve results but whose team loves her, who is well-liked across the organization, and serves on committees and volunteers to help others, and has a presence in both the industry the organization operates in and the community she works in. Those other efforts are admirable. They help the organization, they send the right message about collaboration and boundarylessness and communication. But without primary results they are window dressing.

The manager who achieves her results AND does these things? That's the beginning of an executive, an organizational example. But the other efforts alone do not stand as substitutes for her managerial compass: results.

Perhaps the biggest problem with managers relative to this First Principal is that *the vast majority of managers cannot say with clarity what their primary objectives or expected results ARE.* The primary responsibility for this, of course, lies with the manager's manager.

For any individual in a typical organization, their manager represents the organization to them. When a manager speaks to a direct, the manager speaks for the organization. This is, in fact, part of the nature of *role power.* The way the organization "speaks" to any individual is by empowering the individual's manager with the authority to speak for it.

So, one of the most important jobs of any manager is defining clearly for their directs what results are expected of the direct. Every manager in the organization has a manager (the CEO does too - hers is the board of directors or Chairman). The manager's manager is obligated to define clearly, "here are the results I expect of you." Put differently, "These are the criteria by which I will measure you." For a manager, "criteria" means "results".

Without this guidance about results/criteria from a manager's own manager, most realize they have a choice. And, they also quickly realize they don't like either option.

The first choice is to think carefully about one's role, and then decide what the key results should be. This takes judgment, which is an indispensable part of managing well. The problem with this for most is the danger of being wrong. What if you choose A and B and C, but your boss, who is relatively distant and doesn't communicate much throughout the year, says in December that you did poorly because he preferred X and Y and Z? Almost no managers make this choice, in large part we submit because of most manager's mistaken belief that other managers know what they're doing, but they personally don't.

The second choice is highly preferred yet more ineffective: Try to do everything - even though you know you won't do it well because you will be spread too thin - and hope to be evaluated based on level of effort, hours worked, and "busyness." This is the touting of activity over accomplishment, for which there are well-worn pathways, such as hating email while telling everyone you're always doing it.

There are two steps that we can take to address the situation where we don't know what our primary responsibilities are.

First, think about your role and your team's roles, and create a draft of what you think they are. As a guideline, there are probably no more than 5, IF that.

If you end up with a good deal more than 5 (10+ or more), you may not be wrong that those are responsibilities. But we're not simply listing any or all responsibilities, *we are choosing the most important ones.* So, with a longer list, go back through and rank them top to bottom. If a numerical ranking eludes you, consider putting the results in bands. For instance, with 10 results that you think you have to achieve, rather than each getting a number, put those that are roughly the highest in an A band, those in the middle in the B band, and those that are lowest but still on your list in the C band.

If you can't seem to even do that, just split them into first or second tier, as if there were only two bands, A and B. With all of these lists and bands, the outcome would be to decide that the results in the top group or band would be those that you consider your key results.

Second, take this *draft* to your boss and ask for her analysis and/or blessing. Hopefully she'll share some useful insight.

And, if your boss doesn't give you much to work with, it's time to decide whether you want to trust your own judgment, or just do what everyone else does, steal time from your family, and stay very busy. It will probably boil down to whether you wish to seek success, or avoid failure.

2. A Manager's Second Responsibility is To Retain Team Members

Unfortunately, there's a downside to the organizational necessity that results matter most. When management was first invented, results were all that managers were accountable for. And soon thereafter, labor unions formed.

Managers who, even today, are told only to achieve results, often do just what early unfettered managers did: achieve results at the expense of the worker. If you're not going to get into trouble for abusing workers, and you ARE going to get rewarded for more production even at their expense, managerial tyranny and despotism quickly take root.

Stephen Covey talks about the importance of not killing the goose that lays golden eggs to get the last egg. He calls it balancing the P/PC: production versus production capacity. Without a balance or brake against more production/more results, production capacity is destroyed. Organizations have learned that managers need a brake against the drive for only results.

Because, too often, results are not "first." First ends up morphing into "only."

So, modern effectively managed organizations also measure the ability of a manager to retain employees. This insures that the manager doesn't destroy the value the organization has put into the employee, in terms of hiring costs and time, and compensation, and development.

Organizations also know that results without retention lead to less results in the long term. While executives ARE responsible for looking at and thinking about the long term, managers generally are not. Results can and will and must be measured now, but employee losses may only affect future results.

The best way to achieve high retention numbers is to retain individuals.

Too many managers mistakenly assume the organization does the primary work on retention, through salaries being high enough, benefits being competitive enough, workplace systems and amenities being current and helpful enough, and development opportunities being plentiful enough.

But the organization cannot do enough to maximize retention. The organization's tools are far too standardized and therefore not tailored to every individual. [Thus there are many systems implemented to create retention, making the problem worse and not better.] No organizational system can be exceptionally good at retention. Even if retention overall is high, it is never the result of an organizational system.

*Organizations expect to achieve high overall retention by helping **managers** tailor the organizational systems and cultural experience to each individual, to maximize individual retention, leading to high aggregate retention scores.*

The best analogy for high organizational retention is high annual sales numbers. Organizations do not set out to get a high annual sales number by getting a high annual sales number. Organizations get high annual sales by making many individual sales.

Wrap Up

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2. **A Manager's Second Responsibility is To Retain Team Members**

Highly effective managers achieve the organization's results and do so in a way that retains their team for achieving future results. That means knowing what your results are, and who your people are.