



THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF GREAT MANAGEMENT



UNDERSTANDING HOW THE GREATEST MANAGERS DELIVER SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE OPENS OPPORTUNITIES TO ALL ASPIRING MANAGERS.

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The growth challenge faced by many companies is caused by a complex network of diverse factors. While the lack of product and service differentiation (and the resulting sterile process of innovation) are significant concerns, experienced CEOs and executive leaders will unite in agreement— it’s the managers, stupid! More than any other factor Conchie Associates uncovered during extensive research among seasoned executives, concerns about manager quality and performance were dominant. Whether the issue is customer service or succession planning, the ability of managers to deliver registers as a top concern among executives.

When Gallup produced their “State of the Global Workplace” report in 2013, they provided evidence that employee engagement (arguably the most effective measure of management capability) remained depressingly low, with the ratios of “engaged” to “actively disengaged” employees barely changing over the last 10 years.

Put simply, we have a management problem. But it is a complex problem that lacks a singular solution. Of course, improving our selection process to identify people with greater potential for top quality management would be a great start, but companies must often fight their battles with an existing army, and a 50% turnover on your manager population as a first step may not be the most practical move. We need a better solution.

Our careful analysis of what the very best managers do provides the framework for Conchie Associates’ “Principles of Great Management” e-Learning development program. Understanding how the greatest managers operate and how this contributes to their superior performance opens opportunities to all aspiring managers. Through this research, we have uncovered 7 key principles that differentiate great managers from all others.



1. POSITIVE LEADERSHIP IN BOTH CERTAIN AND UNCERTAIN TIMES

Working for a negative or overly critical boss will impact how an employee feels and performs. If a manager is constantly complaining or blaming others when things go wrong, employees are unwilling to go the extra mile required for greater performance outcomes. We found that the very best managers steer an effective line between disingenuous “happy talk” and a purposeful exposition of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Fundamentally, we found that employees came away from meetings with great managers feeling a greater level of commitment, which translates to improved energy and performance.

2. TRUST AS A PERFORMANCE ADVANTAGE

In our research, we found that teams who talk most about trust tend not to have it. Even still, few individuals understand how to create trust or turn it into a performance advantage. When we asked average or weak managers to define trust, they described it as the absence of negative behaviors, such as lying, cheating or stealing. When we asked the same question to top-performing managers, they mentioned relationship-building through authenticity and clarity of outcomes. Trust is not the absence of negative behaviors— it is the presence of positive behaviors which are consistent and predictable over time. Ask an average or weak manager how they go about building trust, and they will provide a catalog of behavioral rules and frameworks to get them to their goals. Ask a top-performing manager how they go about building trust, and they will say, “I don’t have to.”

3. AN ENVIRONMENT THAT DRIVES HIGHER MEASURES OF ENGAGEMENT

The evidence for great management is provided by superior outcomes drawn from the very best performance of team members. Great managers inspire others to perform beyond expectation, which requires the right engagement drivers in an environment that differentiates the very best from the rest. In this area, all managers can improve through teachable factors that include setting clearer expectations and helping position individuals to do their very best work. Some of the very best managers we studied were not always outstanding, but possessed a natural talent and were pointed in the right direction to understand and apply the elements that drive strong individual and team engagement.



4. POSITIONING 'A' PLAYERS IN THEIR IDEAL ROLES

Great managers are always recruiting, if not for their team, then for the company. Like great sports coaches, they don't wait at the gym for the best players to show up. Great managers also understand that your best players need to be positioned to play to their strengths in order to succeed. Teaching managers to select 'A' players and place them in 'A' positions is one of the most powerful methods to drive superior performance. Few managers we interviewed had received anything more than cursory guidance in selection practices and lacked critical data to effectively position existing team members. Helping managers correct this deficiency will have a huge impact on individual and team effectiveness.

5. OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENTS OF PERFORMANCE FOR GOAL-SETTING

One interesting research finding is that great managers know not to trust their judgment in some situations. They rely heavily on objective data, particularly in the area of performance management and reviews. Numbers don't lie, and the best managers drive a strong, objective focus when it comes to evaluating the effectiveness of individuals on their team. Not only do they set very clear, measurable goals, but they also hold individuals to account and there are consequences for failure. As stated above, managers who are taught to set exponential goals and base their judgments on more objective criteria drive greater clarity and trust within their team.

6. FOCUS ON STRENGTHS, NOT REMEDIAL EFFORT

The research evidence supporting the effectiveness of strengths based strategies in human development is compelling. Great managers recognize the limits of behavioral remediation and see the significant advantages in positioning people to contribute in areas where they are most capable. They also use this knowledge to increase expectations. For instance, they demand that strategic thinkers develop strategy to a high level. They want great networkers to build the most important leads and pipelines. They want executionally-focused individuals to figure out the very best systems and processes to improve efficiency and productivity. The strengths approach – a paradigm shift for so many – is second nature to the best managers.



7. CONSISTENT AND EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF PRAISE AND RECOGNITION

Finally, no good deed should ever go unnoticed. Great managers give praise and recognition in proportion to the achievement. It is quite remarkable how little praise so many employees receive. In all our research, we have yet to receive a single complaint from any employee that they receive too much praise and prefer it to stop. Research suggests that even slightly improving the level of praise can significantly impact the way a person feels and performs. We were encouraged to see that even modest improvements in this area seemed to have a disproportionately positive impact.

Great Management isn't about doing just one thing really well. We found that a consistent focus on these 7 key principles had the greatest positive impact on employee engagement and performance. The good news is that every manager can learn and apply these principles and improve their management capability.



Conchie Associates delivers these principles to a world-wide audience with the hope that every incremental improvement made by every manager will improve the experience and performance of every individual and drive the growth in companies that have struggled to do so up until now.

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Barry Conchie is recognized as one of the world's top experts in executive leadership strategy, assessment, development and succession planning because his approach delivers results. He coauthored the New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling book, "Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow," and is frequently ranked as one of the top global leadership thinkers.