

Successful Software Management: Ten Lessons Learned

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The Technical Manager's Lament

- Started as an individual contributor
- No training
- “The people stuff is hard to do”
 - “the Management stuff isn't easy either”



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Managers Have Two Primary Roles

- Get the best work out of your people
- Create an environment that enables people to work

- Develop a strategy for how you're going to do this

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1. Know What They're Paying You to Do

- What's your mission—the reason they hired you? Some possibilities are:
- Development manager: *Care and feeding of the developers*
- Test manager: *Assess the state of the product under development at any time and report on that state*
- Tech Pubs Manager: *Make sure the documentation doesn't lie.*

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Activity

- You can do this with others or by yourself
 - What's your mission? What do they pay you to do?
 - Is that different from what you think your job is?
 - What do you do about the difference?
- Debrief

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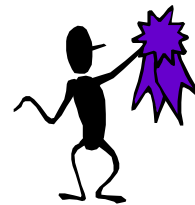
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2. Hire the Best People for the Job

- A manager's greatest point of leverage is in hiring appropriate staff
- "Best" is not necessarily synonymous with "Similar"
- Develop a hiring strategy
- Learn to interview successfully, so you can hire people who can do the job well (stars)



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3. Weekly Time With Each Person

- You need to know what your organization or project is doing
- You need to know what the people are doing, so you can create performance reviews

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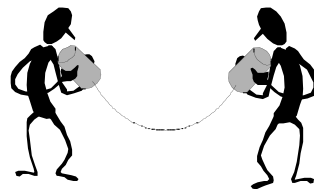
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One-on-Ones

- With everyone, at a regular uninterrupted time
- We talk about
 - Their accomplishments
 - Their issues
 - If they need my help
 - Anything else they need to discuss



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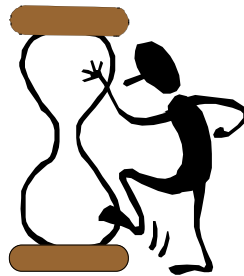
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But, I Don't Have Time to Meet With Everyone...

- You already are
- If you plan time, you can reduce the number of unplanned interruptions
- How will you give timely feedback on performance?



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4. Assume the Person Knows How to Do Their Job

- You *used* to know how to do the job
 - Do you really still know how?
- You hired the people because you thought they could do the work. Let them...
 - Give them assignments
 - Ask if they need help
 - Don't interfere
 - Sneak up behind them and ask "How's it going?"
 - Micromanagement
 - Inflicting advice
- Choose a metric to know when you are stuck
 - This works for you too!

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Successful (and Helpful) Managers

- Assign the work
 - Do they understand the work to do?
 - Do they have the tools required?
- Decide when to check in
- Supply help when requested, and not before

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5. Treat People the Way They Want to Be Treated

- Everyone likes different projects
 - Specific tasks vs. general information
 - New complex problems vs. immediate success
- Everyone is motivated by different things
 - Money is not the only reward
 - Private thank-you's
 - Public recognition
 - M&Ms
 - Movie tickets
 - Team party
 - Ask the group



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Activity

- Get into groups of 3, and talk among yourselves:
 - What other issues do you have around helping people do their best jobs?
- Debrief

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6. Emphasize Results, Not Time

- Hours working do not positively correlate with productivity
- Permit (Force?) people to only work 40 hours per week
 - When they work longer, they do non-work things
 - Productivity goes down
 - If you keep people working only 40 hours per week, they work on work things

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Managing in a High-Interruption Environment

- “You can’t get anything done here between 9am and 5pm”
- Can you cancel meetings?
- Can you or your staff reorganize the work?
- Observe results and obstacles to results
 - Easier to give accurate performance evaluations

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Reward Results

- Plan for a 40-hour week, and reward the work done in that time



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7. Admit Your Mistakes

- Mistakes are embarrassing
- If you admit mistakes, people respect you more
- Don't deny or ignore mistakes



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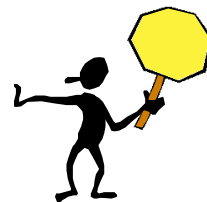
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8. Commit to Projects After Asking Your Staff

- “Can we have this next month?”
- Even if you've already considered the request, the answer is “No”
 - In the moment, you might confuse this request with another request
 - There may be other implications you haven't considered, since it's no longer the same time you first considered this request.



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Don't Train Your Management to Ask You for an Answer

- Your staff will know that you think:
 - I want to know what it will really take you to do this work
 - I'm not afraid to tell my management what it will take

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9. Plan Training Time in the Workweek

- Engineering is constantly changing
- People generally like getting training
- Many inexpensive ways
 - Brown bag lunches
 - Periodic talks from other groups
 - Present projects across the company
 - In-house tool "user group" meeting
 - Outside experts
 - Professional consultants or speakers
 - Knowledgeable friend or colleague



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10. Plan the Work

- Plan what you (your group) can do
 - If you want to do more, plan how
- Identify and manage your project portfolio
- Develop strategies for each product
 - How little can you do?
- Know what done means for each project
- Avoid context-switching

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Help People Do Their Best Work

- Know what you need to accomplish
- Hire the most appropriate people
- Weekly one-on-ones
- Assume the person knows how to do their job
- Treat people the way they want to be treated
 - Not the way you want to be treated

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Create the Working Environment

- Emphasize results, not time
- Admit your mistakes
- Commit to projects after asking your staff
- Plan training time every week
- Plan the project portfolio to get things done and avoid context switching

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Activity

- Get into groups of 3, and talk among yourselves:
 - Do you have any concerns about creating an environment?
- Debrief

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Technical People Can Make Great Managers

- Manage your management career the way you plan and develop tests
 - Develop a strategy
 - Identify how to manage your staff
 - Observe your own work
 - Make corrections and continue
- You don't have to be perfect
- Do enough right to help people do their best work in an environment they can work in

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Resources

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- Weinberg's Quality Software Management, volumes 1-4, Dorset House, New York, 1992-1997
- Buckingham and Coffman, First, Break All the Rules, What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently, Simon and Schuster, 1999.
- Weinberg's Shape forum, www.geraldweinberg.com
- I have a number of articles on my web site, www.jrothman.com

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