



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

S E R I E S

THE SUMMARY OF LIFT

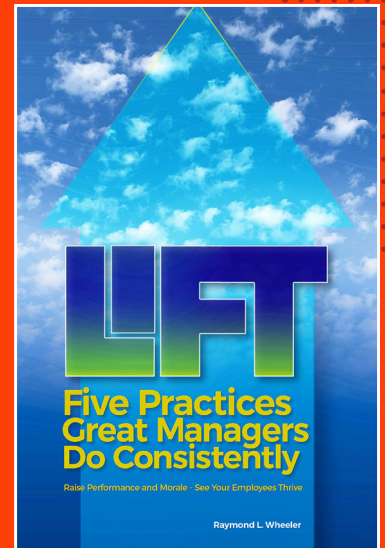
By Raymond L. Wheeler
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Introduction

I have worked for some highly competent managers who lifted my perspective to more significant growth and skill. These managers accomplished great organizational goals and often outperformed what others thought they could achieve. They demonstrated an ability to meet their strategic objectives through people. They were inspiring, challenging, and sometimes corrective. They spoke the truth about what they saw and yet did it in a way that made me want to work more effectively. These managers viewed problems as an opportunity to discover new approaches and develop new skills. In many ways, these managers also acted as leaders.

Conversely, I have also worked for and observed some very disappointing and toxic managers. These managers were more discouraging than inspirational, punitive rather than challenging, and manipulative and abusive rather than corrective.

Oddly, though, these managers all claimed to believe that they were good leaders. However, their demeanor exhibited more anger and frustration than people skills. Some of the managers who



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do not make it into my bucket of great managers consistently met their organizational objectives. But they did not achieve the level of consistently high production and positive morale I found in the great managers. More often, the organizational performance of these toxic managers was mediocre, not impressive. The universal commonality in the thinking of bad managers was the belief their problems stem from bad employees.

I became curious. What makes great managers so successful?

I set about to interview successful managers across several industries. I surveyed related business literature to supplement what I was learning. Then I set out to test the principles I framed in a highly competitive call center environment, an inside sales team environment, a manufacturing environment, and a non-profit church environment. I was delighted to find that the five practices my inquires uncovered worked in lifting employee performance and helped me become a better manager.

1. Create Ownership Not a Dictatorship

Creating ownership is the opposite of exercising dictatorship. The managers I observed acting like dictators were top-down, autocratic bullies, who hoarded strategic information as an arsenal of power. They routinely belittled anyone with an original idea on how to work more effectively or more efficiently. These managers didn't listen, didn't delegate, and acted like their ego was the reason employees exist. These managers could get things done in the short-term but failed to develop consistently excellent operations.

So, how does a manager create ownership, not a dictatorship?

1. Create a culture that hears the truth.

- Create a learning culture in which employees intentionally reflect on their experience and the outcomes of their actions and decisions.
- Give employees the knowledge they need to see the context of their actions and impact of their behaviors on customers, their peers, and stakeholders in the organization.
- Be clear about your core values—make these the centerpiece of why you do what you do.
- Hold people accountable for their actions/decisions.

2. Create a strategy with input from your team.

- Listen to and recruit ideas.
- Build business acumen into every level of the organization.

3. Align performance with strategy and incentives.

- Differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.
- Differentiate heuristic from algorithmic work.

4. Exercise emotional intelligence.

- Self-management.
- Relational management.
- Self-awareness.
- Social awareness.

2. Work Facts Not Emotion

Emotional intelligence turns the attention of the manager from anxiety, panic, and fear to insight. Anxious, fearful managers who try to fix performance

without facts become emotional IEDs that blow up when employees least expect it. In their wake lays a demotivated workforce whose goals shift from flourishing in their track to minimizing their exposure to managerial tantrums.

By exercising an honest and determined effort to define the truth of a situation, the right decisions often become self-evident. Good choices simply cannot be made consistently over time without confronting the facts. Creating a culture of ownership is critical to being able to work facts, not emotion. A culture of ownership sets the stage for the kind of organizational and personal interaction needed to address the performance of your team. Without a doubt, the most challenging part of managing is helping people know where they stand and how they can improve their performance.

So how does a manager work fact, not emotion?

1. Distinguish between optimism and faith.

- Remind your team of the values behind the numbers.
- Let the numbers do the heavy lifting of defining low performance—use the numbers to coach the employee's perspective and skill development.
- Never lose faith in the end of the story while simultaneously holding on to the discipline to confront the brutal facts.

2. Engage the rigor needed to define acceptable performance.

- Identify the benchmarks, tools, and metrics that make up your company's best performers.
- Create an integrated model of the facts in their relationship to the entirety of an individual's performance.

3. Place emphasis on coaching, not punishment.

- Use the integrated benchmarks, tools, and metrics to diagnose poor performance.
- Use questions to help shape employee insight and define needed changes of behavior.
- Build-in accountability by identifying responsibility and time frames.
- Celebrate breakthroughs.

3. Know Your People—Know Yourself

The messy, unpredictable, frustrating, and rewarding work of interpersonal relationships called management often requires a change in one's frame of reference to maintain maximum impact. Perspective is the foundation of management. A manager must bring her whole self to every situation—her values, passion, creativity, emotion, and discerning judgement are essential.

A manager's unique presence is the combination of their driving passion, natural abilities, and acquiring skills. A transformational manager possesses a strong self-awareness rooted in feedback and reality. A poor manager moves slipshod through assignments hoping for the best while waffling between arrogance and depression and anger. The high performing managers I talked with intentionally employ their unique bearing to bring clarity and personhood to the demands, relationships, and strategic objectives of their business.

How do you know your people and know yourself?

1. Engage the opportunity present in your context.

- Show up at work with all your values, passion, creativity, and emotion. Don't be a zombie.



- Step into the challenges of our current job assignment. Commit to succeed—use failure (if it occurs) as a teacher for your next task. Don't hide failure; embrace it, and the lessons it teaches.
- Have and express clear outcomes and a clear vision of where you are taking the team.

2. Seek out and make the most of the feedback.

- Evaluate your mentoring matrix to ensure it is complete. Do you mentor others?
- Take advantage of occasional mentors—don't forgo one-time opportunities to learn. Don't expect every mentor to be a constant presence in your life.
- Read. A book a month is a good start. Write down what you learn and look for ways to use that new information at work this month. If you don't know what to read, ask a mentor for recommendations.

3. Determine your purpose and personal mission statement.

- Write out your epitaph.
- Think backward from your epitaph—begin with the end in mind each day, each month, and each year.
- Write out your mission statement—the idea or concept that keeps the end in mind.
- Use your mission statement to prioritize your activity and evaluate opportunities.
- Identify what makes you unique.
- Use an assessment to define your strengths.
- Ask others for input on how your behavior changes when you are stressed (then listen to what they say).

- Think about what you expect (need) from those around you. Communicate this and ask for help.
- Define your unique presence, i.e., your strengths, interests (motivations), and acquired skills.

5. Understand and utilize your sphere of influence.

- Define your power base (job description, social status, etc.)
- Describe how you are developing permission to lead.
- List what you have accomplished (what have you produced that captures other people's attention).
- Describe how you are developing others and how you delegate to others.
- Describe who you are as a person as other people experience you. (If you don't know—ask them).
- Describe the safeguards you employ to avoid the power paradox.

4. Manage Activities Not Results

Companies expect managers to contribute by getting things done. Great managers possess a “can do” way of thinking that focuses on delivering results. Managers must understand that without results, an organization suffers from a lack of clarity that makes it little more than a mechanism for evasion of responsibility that may infect the entire team.

However, working harder to achieve results usually results in frustration and failure. The focus of the work is the activities that generate results, not the results themselves. Great managers achieve results by focusing the activities that create results. Aiming at results while not understanding the activities that



lead to them only generates frustration on the part of the manager and their team. To manage activities rather than results requires that you engage in an intensive feedback program of employee development instead of the more typical approach of management by exception.

How do you manage activities and not results?

1. Help others see patterns of behavior as a foundation for development.

- Knowledge acquisition.
- Self-awareness.
- Transformational perspective.
- Behavior change.

2. Learn to adjust your management approach.

- Direct: tell people what to do and how to do it; outline specific facts and expectations for action, reinforce improvement, and outlining consequences for nonperformance.
- Coach: nudge people in the right direction, ask questions that help recall critical concepts and skills, share ideas, and facilitate decision-making.
- Support: reinforce good decisions, buttress right actions with encouragement and praise, help the performance of the employee where needed.
- Delegate: entrust the responsibility to the employee, define the essential criteria for action, provide appropriate resources, and allow autonomy of action and feedback.

3. Remember to utilize support elements.

- Feedback.
- Appreciation.
- Workable plan.

4. Delegate don't abdicate.

- Define the task.
- Explain the expected outcome.
- Outline the level of responsibility.

5. Learn to evaluate employee development.

- The recruit: interested and enthusiastic but lacks skills.
- The newbie: enough experience now to be frustrated and unmotivated.
- The producer: is competent in the task, but his or her confidence may be shaky.
- The pro: has mastered the objective and is excited, motivated and confident.

5. Build a Climate of Hope Rather than Cynicism

Each of the managers I interviewed demonstrated one more critical behavior: they intentionally set the tone or climate of their organization, and this climate was the basis of an organizational eco-structure that encouraged risk, development, growth, and excellence. These managers reinforce the environment by setting an expectation about the kind of performance and learning they look for from everyone in their organization.

How important is the climate in establishing highly effective production teams? Research suggests that it is vitally important: "Environment, how people feel about working at a company, can account for 20-30% of business performance."

If climate drives business results, what drives climate? 50-70% of how employees perceive their organization's climate corresponds to the actions of one person: their manager. The corollary observes

how well managers direct those feelings to help a group meet its goals depends on their level of emotional intelligence. Upbeat moods make people view others—or events—in a more positive light.

What does it take to build a climate of hope rather than cynicism?

1. Recognize the power of climate.

- Climate accounts for 20-30% of business performance.
- 50-70% of how employees perceive their organization's environment trace to the actions of their manager.
- For every 1 percent improvement in the service climate, there is a 2 percent increase in revenue.
- The paradox is that the higher up the organizational ladder a person climbs, the more critical the feedback is.
- Poor morale among frontline service reps at a given point in time predicts high turnover—and declining customer satisfaction—up to 3 years later.

2. Lean into the challenge of risk and learning.

- Risk is a combination of experimentation, reflection, and evaluation.
- Management that creates a positive climate depends on learning three-dimensionally, i.e., spiritually, personally, and in skill.
- Great managers work with a sense of purpose, strong self-awareness, and a commitment to learning new skills.
- Engage in multi-level communication.

3. Believe in your team.

- The Pygmalion effect is the mechanism whereby staff excels in response to the manager's subliminal message expectation of success.
- What the manager expects affects the way employees define reality.

4. Recognize the destructive force of dissonant behavior.

- Frustration left unchecked leads to resentment. Resentment distorts a manager's perspective to the point they fail to see contributions made by the individual.
- Resentment left unchecked leads to rancor. Rancor is bitter, deep-seated ill will.
- Rancor left unchecked leads to rage that explodes unpredictably causing employees to withdraw and protect themselves.
- Face the truth about your performance, even if the truth contains brutal facts.
- Reflect on your experience. Evaluate your current skill and performance level. Experiment with new behaviors.

5. Communicate specific outcomes.

- Many managers and supervisors believe they are much clearer in their communication than they are.
- Emphasize activities and expectations (what and how).

Now What?

Smart managers understand the political structure and climate of their organization and don't just strike out on their own. In any process of change, one faces



supporters, encouragers, and resisters. Implementing the five practices of Lift as an organizational strategy requires the manager to put together a support team and find sponsors in their organization who can protect them from others who view the five practices of Lift as a threat.

These practices do not need the blessing of the company to find expression as a personal management style. But to the degree that the organizational

culture does not support the assumptions behind these five practices, a manager will experience tension both internally and externally. But those who adopt the five practices of Lift as their core management strategy will enjoy the benefit of higher productivity and morale.

