Being a Good Manager

Introduction

Being a good manager in a statistical office means facing and handling many different challenges and opportunities every day. It can be both challenging and very rewarding. Every organization is different and requires specific skills. Although the following guidelines are useful in many organizations, it is necessary for you to decide which one is relevant for you.

The relationship between the manager and his/her staff is a substantial key to successful management. Good relationships are based on trust, commitment and engagement, and a good manager's essential role is to build these relationships for the benefit of the organization, so that tasks are done right, effectively, and on time.

A good manager is responsible and accountable for a number of functions including:

- the delivery of a timely work program of high quality
- encouraging innovation and identifying improvements
- building the capability of staff and teams
- contributing to the National Statistical Organisations mission and corporate objectives
- upholding and promoting Statistical Organisations values and policies

For example, a statistical manager is responsible for ensuring s/he delivers the right work program meeting priority requirements from a specific statistical field. S/he needs to possess a good understanding of the program area, and obtain the right resources and capability in order to deliver that work program efficiently and effectively.

In order to do this effectively, a manager must demonstrate capabilities across the management of people, resources and organisational functions. This chapter provides an overview of the capabilities, behaviours and responsibilities a manager is expected to demonstrate.

Key Principles and Objectives

In all organisations employees are expected to act with integrity, to uphold the values, workplace ethics, behaviours and attitudes embodied in the organisation's guidelines. In addition, most National Statistical Organisations hold the following values crucial to the role as an independent provider of information:

- integrity
- professionalism
- service
- relevance
- trust of providers
- access for all

With respect to all of these values, the person managing other people in the workplace has to be a positive role model and ensure his/her staff understand, behave and treat others in a manner that upholds the organisations guidelines and ethics.

Key Processes and Issues

Being a manager requires a special set of skills and responsibilities beyond subject matter expertise. In fact, being a manager is not just a matter of competence, but also a matter of personal skills and character traits. Some of them can be summarized as follows:

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Tips

In addition to the skills and behaviours mentioned above, there are some "pitfalls" a good manager should try to avoid:

- lack of vision: not to define a clear vision of the organization will affect the motivation and, in the end, the performance of the employees
- poor communication skills, including a poor knowledge of new technologies
- micromanagement: to get involved in every aspect of the work, without empowering employees
- withholding helpful or useful information: this will affect mutual trust between the manager and his/her employees
- not giving credit where credit is due: failing to recognize the accomplishments of employees will make them feel not considered as relevant members of the organization
The organisation expects a manager to merge technical skills with planning, guiding, supporting, developing and monitoring his/her area to meet work objectives. It also expects a manager to use his/her experience to contribute to the strategic direction of the organisation.

Showing respect, trust and engagement towards the employees is as essential to effective management as achieving work outcomes. The organisation measures managerial effectiveness as the ability to achieve results through, and with his/her staff. It is reported through performance management arrangements (or equivalent) within the organization.

A manager will undertake activities and make decisions that will demonstrate her/his capabilities and behaviours making him/her an effective manager.

Below is a selection of activities and behaviours a manager will undertake and exhibit:

### People
- exhibit integrity and professionalism and uphold the organisation's values and workplace ethics and support workplace diversity
- leading in an exemplary manner
- select the right people for a team's needs and work requirements
- provide and encourage regular, honest, two-way feedback
- adopt and carry out self evaluation processes (e.g. 360 degrees feedback analysis) on a regular basis
- ensure staff is assigned to relevant, meaningful and challenging work
- empowering staff
- facilitate development opportunities for employees
- recognize people when they do something extraordinary
- grow/develop new managers/managerial skills
- manage work performance, including underperformance
- fostering a positive work culture
- maintain a safe work environment, organise staff leave and flexible working arrangements
- continuously updating his/her own competences and keeping good management techniques up to date.

### Resources and Organisational Responsibilities
- ensure financial and technological resources for a work unit, project or program or an element of these are used in the most effective way, in line with approved delegations to spend public monies, and good business practices under forward work programs
- contribute to, or be responsible for the development of forward work programs in line with strategic directions and business priorities
- contribute to business improvements in processes and work practices
- provide advice and input to the formulation and review of policies, programs, resource allocations or strategic directions
- taking calculated risk
- maintaining systematic processes

### Leadership

Leadership capability is the other side of the coin that complements management capability. Leadership is a practice, rather than a position. Leaders are agile, resilient, authentic, open to learning, draw upon and respond to the perspectives of others. Leadership can be thought of in the following areas of focus:

- People leadership: including creating an innovative and engaged culture, facilitating learning and performance, motivating and developing people, leading diversity
- Strategic leadership: including thinking globally, scanning the environment, systems thinking, generating options and possibilities, establishing vision and outcomes, government business acumen, decision making and planning.
- Leading change: including initiating and sustaining change, mobilising systems, brokering solutions and commitment to action and supporting people through change.
- Leading risk: including understanding how much the organization is prepared to actively manage risks and how much the risk management culture is widespread inside the organization; evaluating how the external environment can impact objectives of the organization.

Links to useful documents
- Management development Martin Lagerström, Statistics Sweden, 2012
- From competences to awareness: approaches and activities to support management development in Istat Cecilia Colasanti, Antonio Ottaiano and Fabrizio Rotundi, National Institute of Statistics of Italy (ISTAT), 2012
- The improvement of HR management by using Lean Jan Byfuglien, Heidi Torstensen and Anne Trolle, Statistics Norway, 2012
- “Be a better leader, have a richer life”, by Stewart Friedman, University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School, Harvard Business Review, 2008