A Managerial Philosophy / Strategy

Unasked questions can lead to dangerous assumptions, however unanswered questions are far less dangerous than unquestioned answers.

The best definition of a manager I know is based on a Harvard Business School text.

“A manager is someone who gets results through other people.”

To this I would add, “by making them successful.”

Results? Of course, why else would you employ him/her?

Through other people? Yes, because people are the ‘stock-in-trade’ for the manager.

By making them successful? Certainly, for it is this single factor that separates the good manager from the others.

Based on this definition, here’s a simple nine-point philosophy that might fit for some.

- **Manage processes not people** - let people manage themselves while you manage the interfaces between them where interests are shared and connections are needed.

- **Develop strategy driven by objectives** - where focus is on outcomes not methods, eliminating ‘silos’ by linking functions horizontally, and by streamlining the work.

- **Define the value-added opportunities** - create a ‘service chain’ from the individual contributions of all involved that will deliver client satisfaction through synergy.

- **Manage change continuously** - since all processes must adapt and evolve to meet the demands of a changing market, but start with the perceptions/beliefs of individuals.

- **Encourage self management** - by providing each person with a mandate - a license to act/contribute and a set of agreed critical measurement indices for ongoing reporting.

- **Facilitate communication** - the life blood of the organization and fuel for processes, that should flow horizontally, elegantly and spontaneously to support objectives.

- **Create a ‘success environment’** - where recognition and rewards are immediate, and people are encouraged to learn and grow as an integral part of their responsibilities.

- **Monitor and measure progress** - through use of a visible scoreboard, showing both organizational and personal achievements in the form of contributions and learnings.

- **Keep a dynamic balance** - with equal emphasis on planning, performance and pulse-point awareness that allows all to see the ‘big picture’ and relate to a shared future.

This could serve as a template for any individual in a managerial role. Feel free to adapt the sequence, words and emphases to suit yourself, which is where the fuller version can assist you.

A sound management philosophy or strategy will become a source of both inspiration and comfort to you, especially when you are up to your ‘keester’ in alligators and asking yourself, “What am I supposed to be doing about this?”
PERSONAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. **Shift from managing people to managing a process**
   - Let individuals own the responsibility for managing themselves
   - Allow them to worry about the knowledge/skills/attitudes relating to their function
   - Work on the series of ‘interfaces’ or ‘value added points’ - manage the white space
   - Focus on the delivery of client satisfaction as a collective responsibility
   - Manage the connections / the ‘hand-off points’
   - Enable, facilitate, coach, encourage - breed success.

2. **Develop and implement strategy, driven by Objectives, to produce satisfaction**
   - Define outcomes/end results, not methods
   - Eliminate non-value adding work, waste and inefficiencies through collaborative effort
   - Encourage cooperation/collaboration - eliminate ‘boundaries’
   - Strive for simplicity/elegance, involvement and commitment in operations
   - Broaden activity bases, accountabilities and contributions
   - Make information and resources easily available

3. **Define the process in value-added and ‘real contribution’ terms**
   - Start with the client - view your internal boss as your main supplier
   - Build a service chain that delivers client satisfaction
   - Serve the client, or serve some one who is
   - Fix the processes, not the people, and get staff to assist you
   - Manage change, response and effectiveness through objectives and goals

4. **Manage the Changes**
   - Change is emotionally based and uncomfortable for most - so it is resisted
   - Change requires new knowledge, skills, habits and, most of all, a new mindset.
   - It is necessary to address significant adjustments to the beliefs and behaviors of others
   - Individuals have to adjust ‘in the node’ in order to accommodate a new process
   - The necessary leverages are in measurements and goals as well as in functions
   - To achieve change, individuals need consistent support / encouragement from you.

5. **Measurement is critical**
   - ‘What gets measured, gets fixed’ so design the new processes with this in mind.
   - Measurement has to happen at the interface (internal/external; hard/soft) (CMIs)
• Measurement information must flow, and be highly visible to all who could be affected
• Good measurements are timely, accurate, focused, consistent and accessible
• Organizational strategic intent; Individual measures: locus of control (Vertical)
• All processes require built-in monitoring devices that include client inputs (Horizontal)

6. Focus on the Environment
• The best investment is to focus on system changes rather than on changing individuals
• In a rapidly changing market, all processes are eroded and will break down over time
• People can fix themselves given the right environment; processes need attention
• Inadequate/broken systems will impede individual performance - few can surmount them.
• What most affects the client is lateral or cross-functional effectiveness/efficiencies
• Those individuals who relate to a role in the process will manage themselves successfully.

7. Encourage Self-Management
• There’s little future in trying to manage people, so manage the white space between them
• Assist those performing the ‘node’ functions to manage their own responsibilities
• A Mandate - a ‘license to contribute’ (Scope; Resources/Restraints; Deliverables; Time lines)
• Create / insist upon self-sufficient performance in the node; you focus on connections
• Allow room to move, experiment, learn and even to fail safely - they’ll thank you for it
• Reward both outcomes and constructive effort - both pay-out and investment.

8. Communication is the Life Blood
• Information must flow to support the new processes, or essential decisions won’t be made
• Spontaneous teamwork is necessary to make the right things happen when they should
• Reduce communication paths/relay points to the minimum, thus reducing errors/delays
• Continuously review communications at every white space, especially those close to clients
• Invest your coaching / training efforts in communication competencies - they’re lifeblood.
• Communication lubricates change; it won’t guarantee success - it will guarantee failure.

9. **Processes require Balance**

• *Planning - Performance - Pulse-awareness* - the three vital components for your attention
• **Planning (front-end effort)** focuses the ‘right’ things and makes your strategies coherent
• **Performance shifts focus to efficiency** - doing things in the ‘right’ way for optimal results
• **Pulse awareness (back-end effort)** ensures that your efforts are valuable to the client
• Everyone should be involved in all three aspects (see the big picture) so to contribute
• Those who are focused on contributing to common objectives are a joy to manage.