

Core Skills Of Managing

By Andrew Leach, MBA

Today's First Nations manager must wear many hats: part-time planner, part-time accountant, part-time coach ... you name it! This article examines the three core skills of strong managers: technical, people and conceptual expertise.

Technical Skills

Technical skills require a specialized and widely accepted body of knowledge. For example, engineers, mechanics, and computer programmers each possess a special kind of technical skill. Here are three specific technical skills to look for in a manager:

- For starters, a skilled manager needs financial skills, including the ability to budget, manage cash flow, and understand financial statements. Having strong financial skills will greatly enhance a manager's ability to "run a tight ship." Not having these skills can lead to lots of trouble!
- Another important technical skill is writing, especially report and proposal writing. Managers should be able to write both well and quickly. For example, it shouldn't take a manager very long to compose a memo or short report.
- Finally, having computer skills is an absolute must for today's senior managers. While they don't need to be computer wizards, they should at least be comfortable with word processing, spreadsheets, and using the Internet.

Does your manager have solid technical skills? In answering this question, look at his concrete skill sets. Can she interpret financial statements? Can he write proposals and reports? Is she fairly comfortable using computer programs?

People Skills

People skills are called "soft skills" because they can be difficult to evaluate and measure. Good people skills include the ability to communicate clearly, be assertive (not passive or aggressive), and be able to gain the respect and support of key staff.



Andrew Leach is from the St'at'imc Nation (Lillooet, BC) and has a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA). He also operates a successful management consulting business, and welcomes feedback to his articles.

andrew@andrewleach.com | 604.868.4004
www.andrewleach.com

Suite 200-100 Park Royal,
West Vancouver, BC, Canada V7T 1A2

Studies show that managers with good people skills are emotionally mature and relate well with others. They have a good sense of boundaries and are open to self-improvement.

At one time, Ivy League business schools didn't emphasize teaching people skills. However, industry leaders started complaining, saying these schools were creating managers who could crunch numbers but couldn't work with others. In response, many prestigious schools redesigned their programs to include team building and interpersonal communications. Today, most business and management schools offer a portion of soft skills training.

Does your manager have good people skills? To answer this, look at his history with handling interpersonal conflict. Does she have the respect of her peers? His subordinates? Her bosses?

Conceptual Skills

While technical and people skills are required at all organizational levels, senior managers especially need well-honed conceptual skills, which include the ability to plan and strategize.

In essence, this means having the ability to see how your organization fits within the community's social, political and economic structures. Having good conceptual skills means you can see the big picture and still pay attention to important details. Like a skilled chess player, conceptualizers can forecast several moves ahead and still make the right moves now.

Does your senior manager have well-rounded conceptual skills? To help answer this, consider his ability to plan and strategize. Can she create and communicate a vision? Does he have focus? Above all else, is she able to execute?

If you can find a manager with an abundance of these skills, count your blessings! More likely, however, he may be lacking a little in one of these areas. That's okay and to be expected. Technical skills can be developed with a combination of formal training and on-the-job experience. People and conceptual skills, however, will probably take more time and resources to develop. Regardless of your situation, make sure you hire and retain senior managers who have the capacity to develop these three essential skills.



Andrew Leach is from the St'at'imc Nation (Lillooet, BC) and has a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA). He also operates a successful management consulting business, and welcomes feedback to his articles.

andrew@andrewleach.com | 604.868.4004
www.andrewleach.com

Suite 200-100 Park Royal,
West Vancouver, BC, Canada V7T 1A2