

Managing Up, Down And Across

By Andrew Leach, MBA

Many managers focus on managing subordinates only. But this is not the only way to manage. This article will discuss the concepts of managing from above, managing from below, and managing across, and how these concepts can be applied to First Nations organizations.

Managing from Above

For years, most management textbooks focused on managing as the supervisor bossing the subordinate. This is often referred as managing from above, and is a very direct and explicit way to manage. For example, when you give your subordinate a work-related task, he should clearly understand he is obligated to follow your direction.

Although managing people from above is explicit and direct, often it's not easy! Indeed, many managers find they spend too much time managing problem employees. Usually, 20% of your employees will give you 80% of your headaches (this is known as the 80-20 rule and can apply to a number of other issues, as well).

The first step in managing the 20% of employees who create headaches is to accept the 80-20 rule. Next, make the 80-20 rule work in your favour by taking proactive steps to manage these difficult employees, including:

- Focusing on their behaviours rather than their personalities
- Being respectful even when disciplining, and
- Finding creative ways to motivate

Managing from Below

As a subordinate, you also have some ability to manage your boss. Really! The basis for this assertion is the boss-subordinate relationship is interactive, with communication flowing both up and down. Managing from below is also expressed in the saying, "You cannot manage without being managed."

Now before you start telling your boss what to do, know that managing from below is more subtle than managing from above.



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

The first step is to understand and appreciate what motivates your superior. For example, as a band administrator, you probably have at least one Chief and several councillors who are senior to you. Each elected official has his or her personal motivations for sitting on council. You can learn what motivates them by asking each individual why they accepted a council position. Listen closely to their words and cues to their motivation.

Once you know what drives your superiors, you can start framing your own goals and motives to reflect your supervisor's goals and motives. For example, if your superior is committed to increasing employment, find a way to show how your proposed project will create jobs.

Some of your needs and goals may not fit with all of your superiors' interests. That's okay and to be expected. But if you can capture enough of the right people, you have a better chance of having your needs met. Still, be realistic. You may have to adjust your aims to more closely align with the aspirations of key superiors. However, if you are diligent and creative, you should be able to meet both you and your supervisor's needs.

Managing Across

Managing across involves managing people in similar-level positions as you. For example, a social director and an education director are often at the same level in a First Nations administration office.

Compared to managing up or down, most managing across situations are indirect. Indeed, similar-level positions often have no formal reporting relationship between them. So why should we try and manage across? Because you often share similar challenges and can join forces to meet both of your needs. For example, regular interfacing with your peers can generate a lot of good ideas and opportunities.

Similar to managing from below, you need to understand what motivates your equals when managing across. With this in mind, it is important to learn as much as possible about your peer's area of responsibility. Look for similar issues you both face often these will be the issues that bind you.

Managing across is not always an indirect relationship. Consider Chief and council positions, for example. Each of these positions usually has one vote on council. Thus, every elected position, including the Chief, will often need the support of other councillors to get a "pet project" off the ground. In this situation, the ability for councillors to affect each other's interests is very direct. It's key to discuss each other's concerns before major decisions are considered, allowing you to establish ties and find common ground.

Now some people may think managing down, up and across are manipulative. These skills certainly can be abused and some people do misuse them. Watch out for them! But in reality, you are trying to create win-win situations with colleagues. And, frankly, that is the bottom line with managing people, up, down or across.



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