

What makes a good club manager?

by Herman Zaccarelli, foodservice editor



Being a club manager is one of the most interesting occupations in the world, because it challenges the ability to administer the most difficult creatures on earth — men and women. A club manager must do this with fair play, appreciation of people's problems, and knowledge of business principles and practices — by planning, organizing, controlling, and supervising so as to mesh these in his organization's interest.

Whether you are managing a kitchen, an army, a nation, or a golf course, the principles are fundamentally the same. Managers are people who get things done through other people, who make things happen in the best way to arrive at desired objectives. They originate, plan, and push things through.

Autocrat or democrat?

The club manager belongs to one of the world's scarcest species: the

leader. Everyone on his staff has a practical stake of the most concrete kind in the quality of his leadership. Leading a group to an understanding of a complex problem and securing cooperation in working it out is one of the highest forms of management — and the most rewarding.

A bustling manner and a commanding voice are not necessarily signs of good leadership. The leader doesn't say "Get going!" He says "Let's go!" He is always a step in front carrying a banner, not wielding a whip at the rear of the ranks. A dictator may point, with some justification, to certain advantages in his system, such as speed of action and vigor in execution, but the factors against acceptance of dictatorship far outweigh the benefits. Instead of winning people to his side, the dictator plays upon feelings of anxiety, anger, apathy, and despair. While the iron hand has its time and place, a completely autocratic manager shuts off useful criticism and eventually comes to believe he is infallible. "Power corrupts, and complete power corrupts completely."

Men who have the mental and moral strength required for good leadership have sincere tolerance of people's race, color, creed, nationality, and idiosyncrasies. They do not, on the other hand, tolerate in themselves such traits as grouchiness, impatience, temperamental outbursts, prima donna attitudes, favoritism, inconsistency, and buck-passing.

Provide incentive

The club manager must be an organizer. He is expected to distribute duties or functions among subunits and individual employees in such a way as to operate at high efficiency, at the required time, by the best method, and at the lowest cost. It is the manager's duty to detect any discrepancy between a worker's potential productivity and his performance, and to see that the gap is narrowed. It is obvious that if this could be done by the rule book there would be no special quality needed in a club manager. Rules and directives can take you so far, but they do not provide incentive to get things off the ground, the courage and stamina to lead the way through difficulties and around ob-

stacles, or the competence to wrap up a project successfully.

The functions of a club manager are greatly involved with fundamental understanding of people. It is here that administrative intelligence meets its greatest challenge and earns its greatest satisfactions.

Know needs

Employees are no longer merely looking for the highest wages and the best benefit programs. What people are looking for is personal recognition, respect for their thinking, and contributions in improving an overall operation. Management must take time to listen to the combined best thinking of those who will be affected by, or those responsible for carrying out, a particular operation.

As a club manager, you need insight — which is a sort of three-dimensional or stereoscopic way of looking at people and situations. With your eyesight you will see things wrong in an employee's work; with your insight you will see the cause. This is "empathy," or imaginative projection of your consciousness into another being.

Keep in mind that all people have latent abilities. Periodically, give a worker a job slightly over his head, one at which you know he can succeed if he tries. Be the sort of club manager who wants every worker to make good, who helps him make good, and who rejoices when he succeeds. This is far from toadying to the all-too-common spirit of making things easy. The happy worker must be a productive worker. Employees should not be encouraged to become so contented that they permit their gracious living to interfere with work.

It is important for a club manager to have faith in the capacity, dignity and infinite worth of each individual in his organization. Without it, no organization can be effective.

Delegate authority

Wear your title lightly, but make sure your workers know that you will discharge your responsibilities. While a club manager should associate with his workers and show himself an example of courtesy and friendliness, he should nevertheless maintain the dignity of his position.

PROFILE OF A CLUB MANAGER ON HIS WAY UP

- > He is eager to learn. He wants to know the what, who, when, and how of every facet of the organization's operations. He has an inquiring mind.
- > He wants to help others. He realizes that the job is big enough for more than himself.
- > He is ambitious. He has a compulsion for achievement and wants things to be better than they have been or now are.
- > He admits his mistakes — and then does something about them.
- > When he doesn't know, he admits it — then determines to learn.
- > He doesn't "pass the buck" — he grabs it.
- > He passes along good suggestions and ideas.
- > He isn't so concerned about who gets the credit.
- > He can shift gears — he's flexible.
- > He reads — is always searching for better ideas both in and out of his field of technical responsibility.
- > He innovates (is creative) and tries different ways, techniques, procedures. He's always trying to find a better way.
- > He's not a clock watcher.

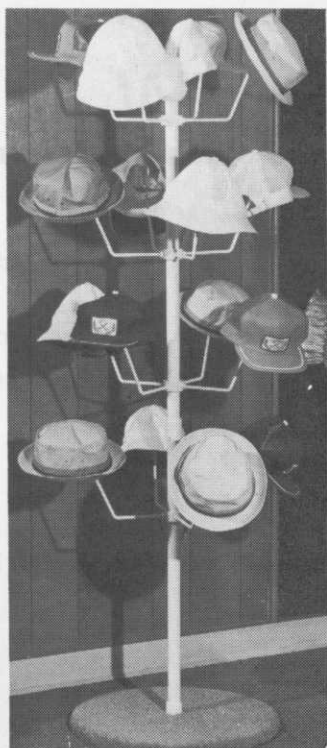
PROFILE OF A CLUB MANAGER ON HIS WAY DOWN

- > He is not organized (always putting out fires).
- > He tries to maintain status quo (don't rock the boat).
- > He is defensive (takes things personally).
- > He has unresolved personal problems (tries to get away from himself).
- > He wants to avoid comparison (is losing confidence).
- > He is unimaginative (thinks small, won't stretch his mind).
- > He is a procrastinator (things will work themselves out).
- > He's a buck-passer (it's the fault of employees, the system).
- > He is not flexible (takes an immovable position).
- > He does it all by himself (no one else can do it).
- > He frequently loses his temper (lacks emotional control).
- > He feels his "status" will carry him (prestige, title, memberships).
- > He thinks he's reached the point where he can retire on the job (he's lazy, he's "got it made").
- > He has lost interest in people (people have changed).
- > He has lost sight of his goals (he's forgotten where he's going).

He will allow others to share the limelight and will delegate responsibility. Along with responsibility, he will delegate the authority to carry it out.

Delegation comes easiest to the man who has a strong sense of the end result and strives to attain it through

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others. This requires good two-way communication. The effective manager is one with whom employees feel free to discuss important things about their jobs. It confirms their belief that their jobs are an important part of the organization.

Firm, but flexible

The maintenance of discipline in business is a clear-cut, indisputable obligation of management. There must be rules, but they don't need to entail regimentation, which destroys personality, standardizes thought and action, and stultifies the spirit.

Be resolute in enforcing the principles in which you believe, but yield in matters of custom which make no difference to the success of your oper-

“The effective manager is one with whom employees feel free to discuss important things about their jobs.”

ation. Make clear that your supervision is designed not only to uncover bad work but also to bring good work to light. This is management by inspiration, not by repression; management by analysis, not by paralysis.

Keep growing

Club management is not something you learn once and then possess forever. The explosion of knowledge in the past few years demands that managers keep learning and re-learning. Even abstract knowledge on all kinds of subjects is helpful. It may be foreign to your line of work, but it provides background and room for growth. A well-stored mind makes you capable of thinking on your own. It gives you size. No person will have the cyclopedic knowledge for handling all club management functions unaided. However, a club manager should know where to find the answers. □