

Everyone is an “expert” and they love to give advice. How many times have you heard “if I were you I would.....” Well-meaning, yes, BUT TOTALLY USELESS.

WHY? To know what to do is not to know how to do it. Imagine a Master’s Degree in Skiing -- courses on slopes, technique, waxes, famous slopes around the world, the finance involved – yet not once is the student on the slopes actually doing what skiing involves. While instruction and coaching are fine, the only way to learn how to ski is by getting on a pair of skis and falling down and getting up over and over until you master gravity.

Is it not the same with becoming a manager? Everyone has an opinion:

- be tough
- listen
- be approachable
- do not be like the last boss
- be just like the last boss
- do not get too close to your subordinates
- get close to your subordinates

Really helpful!

The fundamental conceptual problem with advice is that while it tells you WHAT to do it does not tell you HOW to do it. If managing is a skill, a competency then it has to do with action – with doing certain things and not doing other things. Learning to do certain things is a **how** not a what. And messages in the brain do not automatically become “you.”

So someone says “be tough.” What does that mean? You should walk around with an unhappy serious face. You should bark at people. You should have a closed-door policy. You should punish subordinates for the least mistake. Curse at mistakes. What does “tough” mean?

In a certain San Francisco company with a national reputation there is a special elevator for the senior executive. They are never seen except at the Thanksgiving Dinner when they serve the turkey. AND THEIR MESSAGE IS?

In the sports world learning is concrete – coaches telling you what to do and how to do it. Each position has its responsibilities and practice, practice, practice until you get it right.

Why not in the world of management? Is managing not also concrete. For example:

- How do you discipline an employee?
- How do you give praise that is heard?
- How do you mentor a young employee?
- How do you motivate an older employee who is no longer promotable?
- How do you handle an employee expecting a position, not chosen?
- How do you help employees handle downsizing and layoffs?
- How do you establish department culture?

These are concrete actions that you have to take. It helps to know that you learn one step at a time, slowly, with setbacks along the way.

In the midst of your anxiety you turn to the company training program which is, often, of little use. Run by HR, it presents your position the way the top wants it to be performed, perhaps useful information but somewhat abstract. Secondly, you are attending with your peers and you all have to “look good” and certainly not raise any embarrassing questions.

Or you go to the local university and take a night class and get a big book to read. You read a lot of interesting stuff – Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Herzberg’s two-factor theory, Michael Porter’s competitive forces strategy model – but these appear to have little to do with what you do.

For his doctoral dissertation Henry Mintzberg followed **5** CEO’s to figure out how much time they spent on which activities. Ever since this has been included in all management courses as **WHAT EVERY MANAGER DOES!** But Mintzberg was shadowing CEO’s not your typical manager.

The purpose of this website/blog is to help you on your path to becoming the manager you want to be, you need to be.