

81

Essential
Skills for Great
Managers

Challenges *Smart* Managers Face

HOW TO OVERCOME THE
BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING
MANAGERS & LEADERS TODAY

TIM CONNOR

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SOFT SELL*

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*The man who doesn't read good books
has no advantage over the man
who can't read them.*

—MARK TWAIN

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The Sales Handbook

The Trade-Off

The Voyage

Your First Year in Sales

To each of my clients over the years who have
contributed to my knowledge, experience,
and understanding: a special Thank You.

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P R E F A C E

Why another book on management? If you check Amazon or your local bookstore, you will find hundreds, if not thousands, of books on every aspect of management, leadership, supervision, and related topics written during the past fifty-plus years. So, why one more book on this overworked subject?

I could tell you any number of possible reasons, but the primary one is this: I have read most of the current books on these topics, and although many of them are good and a few are worthy of my praise, most of them fail to address the critical issues and challenges facing managers today. And when managers do not deal successfully with these routine challenges, whether small or significant, it costs their organizations market share, customer loyalty, employee performance, and profits.

This book specifically addresses the thirteen major areas of challenge. The format is simple, the ideas are straightforward, and the objective is clear: to help you identify those challenges that you or members of your management team are facing that may be affecting your bottom line and to give you practical and inexpensive suggestions to handle these challenges once and for all.

Having said this, I don't mean to imply that this will be easy. There will be change and work required of you if you are to reap short- and long-term benefits. It takes courage and commitment to become what I call a "leading-edge" manager, business owner, or executive.

There is one major premise woven through each of the topics covered: if you have a problem, crisis, issue, or any negative situation in your business, department, division, or group, look up the ladder for the cause and down the ladder for the solution. If you are a manager with a tendency to reverse this process, you have a great deal to gain from this book.

Obviously, managers face more than 81 challenges. But most of the ones not covered are addressed either directly or indirectly in the 81 that are included.

The most critical section of this book, "It's Your Turn," comes toward the end of the book. The workbook format of this section will help you identify and put into operation the changes you need to make in your management, communication, or leadership style in order to become a leading-edge manager.

Of course, you can always benefit from reading just a chapter here or there. You may even have a number of "Aha!" experiences. But transformation requires more than this. It requires self-awareness, a willingness to change, a plan to implement, and a follow-up strategy to ensure on-going success.

Completing the workbook section is essential to getting this material out of your head and into action, transforming your management behavior and your organization.

So reading is not enough. Mastery requires study and personalization of the concepts, techniques, and ideas learned. My work is done: I wrote the book. Your work will begin after you have read it.

*Self-reverence, self-knowledge,
self-control—these three alone
lead to success.*

—ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

INTRODUCTION

Management is a science, an art, and a calling. It requires the patience of Job, the dedication of an Olympic athlete, the persistence of a child, the people skills of a loving grandparent, the study-focus of Einstein, and the humorous outlook of George Burns.

In my book *91 Mistakes Smart Salespeople Make*, I share a simple concept that is appropriate for this book as well. That concept states that there are only three ways to improve your management outcomes and results: Do more right. Do less wrong. Or do both. In this book I will share numerous ideas, techniques, and concepts that, when understood, embraced, and followed, will have a positive impact on your management style and outcomes.

One of the critical factors for success in management is a healthy and positive self-image. Essentially a person's self-image will determine:

- How they feel about themselves and others
- How they view the world around them
- How they respond to life's circumstances
- How they determine what goals to set for themselves
- How they react to failure and adversity

- How they behave when no one is looking
- How they handle difficult situations
- How they envision their own destiny

Organizations are made up of groups of individuals with various self-images that together create an “organizational self-image.” Organizations also create a destiny, which is often consistent with how the combined group of employees in a department, division, group, or even the entire organization see themselves as an entity. For example, if employees in a customer service department see themselves as unimportant and unappreciated, the department will typically treat customers in much the same way. Yes, there may be select individuals who treat customers with respect and concern. But generally speaking, because of its low self-image, the department will treat most customers poorly.

If the management team in an organization is not in sync with its direction, goals, decisions, strategy, philosophy, and communication, it will create confusion, lack of harmony, under-empowered employees, and poor employee performance. If the members of a sales team feel that they are unnecessary, are constantly under pressure to perform, receive little or no positive reinforcement or appreciation, or feel that other departments or senior management perceives them only as arrogant troublemakers, their individual self-image will become the “group self-image.” The results of this “corporate self-image” are often the same as in the list of consequences mentioned previously. One common sales outcome

of poor self-image is to meet price resistance by generally reducing price rather than selling value, thereby contributing to low margins and profits.

Are management roles changing? In today's business environment, a number of conditions are impacting the roles of managers today. A few of them include the following:

- Cultural and age diversity
- Impact and use of technology
- A growing international marketplace
- Unclear or inconsistent ethical standards
- Employee stress levels increasing
- Corporate direction and strategy under fire by consumers
- Employee desire for greater independence and autonomy
- Wide range of consumer choices for products and services
- Employees with less-specific skills
- Relentless and accelerating change

Given these factors, I ask you again: are the roles of managers, supervisors, executives, and business owners changing today? Yes! Here are just a few of the areas of change that I have observed during the past several years of coaching and consulting with my clients in various industries worldwide:

- Increased responsibility for large numbers of remote employees
- More time “doing” than “managing”
- Increased time coaching employees on personal issues
- Greater numbers of job openings that can't be filled

- More time communicating via email than in person or by phone
- Less time for their own personal development

Again, I could have included many more, but the essence is this: if you are still using management techniques and behaviors that you used more than five years ago, I guarantee you that you are going to be less effective as a leader, coach, and manager in today's changing world.

But some of the fundamental managerial roles, attitudes, and responsibilities have not changed, such as:

- The need to trust your employees and have your employees trust you
- The need to respect employees' uniqueness
- The need to communicate openly and honestly with employees
- The need to give employees the recognition and appreciation they deserve
- The need to have a clear future career path available to employees
- The need to compensate employees fairly

Read on to learn and unlearn. Read to grow, and read to self-discover.

MANAGEMENT QUIZ

1. You should always praise employees in _____.
A. Private
B. Public
2. Listening is the most important management skill.
A. True
B. False
3. Most managers spend too little time planning.
A. True
B. False
4. You should always discipline employees in _____.
A. Private
B. Public
5. Every employee can benefit from additional training.
A. True
B. False
6. Corporate culture should flow _____.
A. Top-down
B. Bottom-up

7. Morale is directly related to _____.
- A. Corporate culture
 - B. Communication patterns
 - C. Stress levels
 - D. Management style
 - E. All of the above
8. Employee's perceptions become _____.
- A. A nuisance
 - B. Reality
9. One of the biggest managerial weaknesses is failure to give timely positive and negative feedback.
- A. True
 - B. False
10. Organization direction is one of the biggest employee _____.
- A. Issues
 - B. Concerns
 - C. Frustrations
 - D. Needs
 - E. All of the above
11. Money and/or benefits are the number one issue with most employees.
- A. True
 - B. False

12. Most employees feel they receive adequate recognition.
A. True
B. False
13. When you hire under pressure you always hire _____.
A. Beneath your standards
B. The best person for the job
14. One of the major responsibilities of a manager is to motivate their employees.
A. True
B. False
15. One of the biggest employee concerns is management _____.
A. Direction
B. Vacation policy
16. Turnover is the direct result of _____.
A. Poor hiring
B. Poor training
C. Poor compensation plans
D. Morale
E. All of the above
17. The best employees come in early and stay late.
A. True
B. False