

4 Rules to Improve Your Management Right Now!



by Brian Braudis

Introduction

I work with large and small businesses. I advise start-ups, mid-market, and publicly traded firms. Here's what they all have in common:

Their brand and service are often much better—MUCH better than their management. Which means that many companies are succeeding in spite of their management rather than because of it. Sure, you may be doing well enough, but would you increase retention and raise efficiency if you invested in some straight-forward, no-cost 21st century management practices?

Would you prevent loss of revenue, increase retention and increase your productivity if you "patched some holes" in your management?

My experience is that inside-out is one of the easiest ways to improve and grow your business. However, this low hanging fruit—that you have complete control over is often overlooked.

What are the "gaps" in management that cause the most damage?

- Micromanaging
- Heavy-Handed or Overbearing Tactics
- Favoritism (perceived)
- Over-Reliance on Position Power
- Lack of Accountability
- Insensitive Banter

Your brand deserves better!

The qualities that lead to the highest achievement are not easily recognized or well understood. They can't be taught in a classroom or an executive development program. The insight to strategically read the patterns, nuances and undercurrent of situations will help managers eliminate problems before they happen. You'll reduce the likelihood of problems becoming pervasive. Managers must also have the ability to understand people. They must have the integrity and credibility to build trusting relationships. Most importantly, they need the awareness to recognize and correct their shortcomings. Lastly, the capability to imagine a better future, share it with their team and execute on that vision is critical.

That's why I put this white paper together. I want to arm you with four straight-forward, practical management rules that if implemented would significantly reduce revenue loss from absenteeism and resignations and increase overall productivity.

Thanks for reading this white paper. I hope you find it useful.

Brian Braudis
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Rule One: Go Deeper

Management today is more complicated. New challenges combine with pre-existing, pervasive problems that may have been in place before your reign as manager. These deeply rooted and complex workplace challenges revolve around people. They require a more intentional focus and depth than any "management training" can offer. People problems need people solutions.

The functions of management—planning, organizing, leading, and controlling are inadequate to address these monumental "human" difficulties. Your team is tired of rote management techniques. What matters today is your energy and enthusiasm. The approach you bring, and what you are willing to give to your team.

Hidden within these epic human challenges is a wide-open opportunity for managers to increase profit and productivity and create progress through improvement—a better work environment. The conscientious manager senses the chance for improvement. The opportunity to make a difference is there, at your doorstep, staring you in the face.

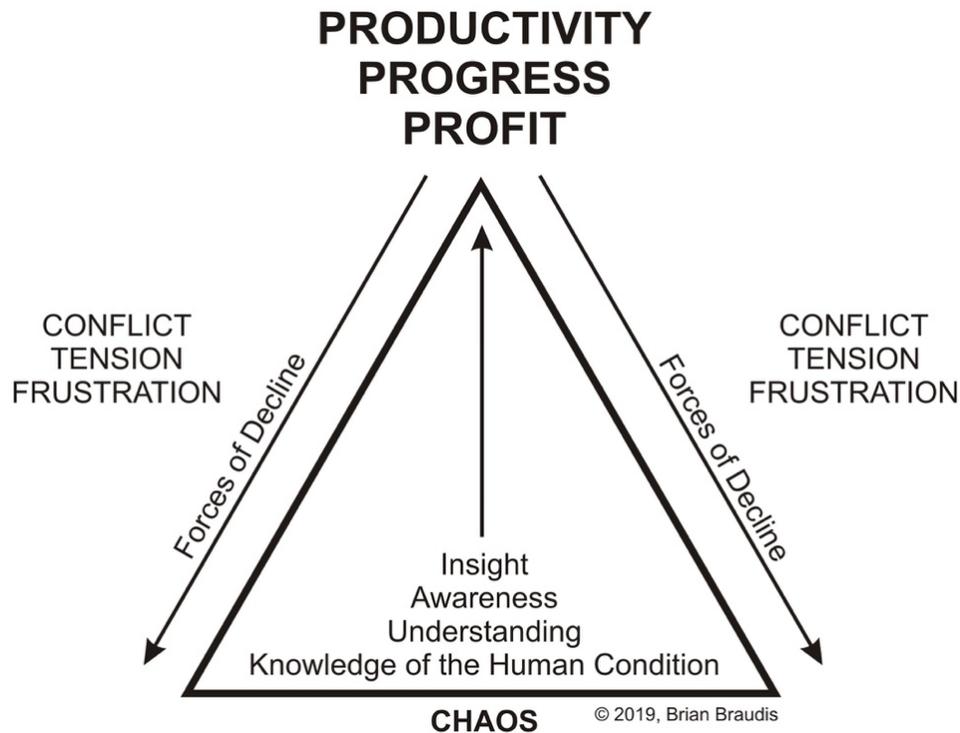
Begin by intentionally deepening your knowledge of people. Slow things down and observe. Develop understanding, insight, and awareness of the "human condition." Your shift from actor to an observer will reveal what is going on at a deeper level.

Develop your ability to understand or, at least be open to trying. I don't mean that in a flash, you know with full comprehension. Instead, you recognize the need for understanding over discipline or a forced attempt to "fix" something. You respond with composure as opposed to reacting emotionally.

Remember, friction and fighting—a wrong situation wrongs everyone. Conflict reduces humanity and productivity; profit and progress soon follow. People don't need discipline to be productive. They need to be understood.

Take the heroic-manager path. Shoulder the responsibility for civility and professionalism and put productivity, profit and progress on the fast track.

Let the following visual guide what you want to emphasize and the results you want to create.



Rule Two: Communicate

One of the primary things employees say they need to feel engaged and productive is regular, meaningful communication with their managers. Good management quite simply depends on communication. Clear, confident, resonant and respectful interaction will engender trust, followership, and engagement.

Get specific. Simple, concise and in-person is more effective than lengthy, complicated and confusing data reports or email. Nothing can substitute for face-to-face dialog. Yes, dialog rather than a monologue. This does not have to be communication with the senior manager. Employees and team members know the demands on managers. They understand the value of authentic face-to-face manager/team exchange. Intentional, attentive communication shows your team that management is genuinely interested in what they are doing.

Your team also appreciates informal, spontaneous discussions where they can see and feel that their message is received. By engaging with your team this way, you demonstrate that you value their input. Your presence and attention are huge daily progress builders.

Demonstrate beyond words. What you do supersedes what you say. Remember Emerson's dictum; "what you do speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say." Showing your team who you are is much more effective than mere telling. Make your message a *living* dialog.

Body language and tone will validate everything that you say. The mechanisms for how managers create impact through communication are: 55 percent through body language, 38 percent our tone, and our words amount to only 7 percent. Use your energy and enthusiasm to communicate.

Sending out a procedure in a memo is not nearly as effective as walking around and informally talking about it. Share your thoughts on the need for continuous improvement. There's something about a good manager's presence. Like beauty, it's hard to describe, but you know it when you see it.

Rule Three: Manage Progress Not People

Progress is fundamental to human nature. Of all the things that can boost emotions and inspire creative productivity in your team, the single most important is making progress in meaningful work.

On any given day, your team's progress—or lack thereof, is ruled by a mix of reactions—perceptions, emotions, and motivations that can either pull them to higher engagement or drag them down. Progress inhibitors like setbacks, toxicity, hassles, and constraints can readily send team spirit spiraling downward to the point where frustration and disappointment take over.

However, if handled correctly, such as managers openly discussing setbacks as "lessons." You change the energy dynamic. A problem then becomes a challenge. These positive interactions between teams and managers create a framework of support. Ultimately, team members feel a sense of accomplishment, happiness, and even delight. In other words, progress!

Be a model, not a critic. Avoid the toxicity of high pressure and punitive measures. Sharply critical remarks, sarcasm, barking orders, judging, and labeling, shuts people down.

Don't micromanage. When you micromanage, trust is not visible to your team. When trust is unclear your team is asking, *doesn't she/he trust me?* Worse, this indecision acts as a force of decline. It shows up in attitude and performance. Put daily progress on a superhighway by freeing your team of daily hassles, constraints and unnecessary controls.

Recognize and leverage the tremendous influence you have to boost team spirit and feed motivation by fostering daily progress. Be deliberate and intentional about creating an environment that enables your team to make steady progress and build momentum.

Provide autonomy and promote team-ownership of the work. Nourish your team's desire for progress through involvement, affiliation, respect, and encouragement. Show authentic appreciation for good work. Managers drive the efforts of everyone performing together like a sports team going for the big title, the big prize.

Rule Four: Be the Island of Commitment in a Sea of Uncertainty

Managers can see through uncertainty. Increased global influence, more demanding customers and disruptive new players serve as vague competition. But all your team members see is uncertainty. Their uncertainty leads to anxiety, and that makes people susceptible to stress and petty preoccupations. They become less productive and more vulnerable to conflict and tension—forces of decline.

During times of upheaval, team members are quietly watching the signals managers send. They are asking, *are managers worried too? Should I be more worried?*

Team members need reassurance. They need to see managers who are anchored, like islands of commitment in a sea of uncertainty. Conscientious and intentional managers bring a calming presence and a higher perspective to the context of uncertainty. They exude enthusiasm for the challenge.

Show your team that you believe in them and what they can accomplish. Hold up the vision you have for what your team can achieve and get them involved. When your team sees your certainty and your commitment, their uncertainty will evaporate.

Conclusion:

Your management should help your brand. It should be a living dialog of your values—professionalism, expertise, and integrity—what you stand for. Managers give life to your values.

The actions that make a difference and lead to the highest achievement aren't derived from management or executive training programs. They come from a deep understanding of the human condition, insight into what drives people and awareness of our own biases and predispositions. Management has a bad reputation of allowing problems to escalate and fester. Remember, only wine gets better with age.

You have the reins. It is the very purpose of management to free the workplace from the forces of decline and reduce the suffering that poisons us all. You don't need a coach or a consultant to help you increase profit and create progress (although I'm happy to help!☺).

Recognize that you have the resources within you to make a difference and help others see that they too have resources and incredible potential.

Sure, this is asking a lot. It's asking for everything. But what is the alternative?

Significantly improving your management isn't just a nice thing to do. It's the right thing, and we should do it. One-by-one we can make a difference, we should do it...we must do it!

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