

MARK HORSTMAN



# EFFECTIVE MANAGER

WILEY

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*Cofounder, Manager Tools*

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*This is what I tell my friends*

*Dedicated to my wife Rhonda and our wonderful children:  
Kate, Travis, Ashley, Courtney, Drake, Christopher, and Jaggars*

*On behalf of Mike Auzenne, my Manager Tools cofounder  
and our great team of professionals at Manager Tools*

# Introduction

## Who This Book Is for, What It's about, and Why

IF YOU'RE A MANAGER, this book was written for you. If you've ever struggled to lead your team or wondered how to handle a difficult situation, this book is for you. If you find the people side of management (and that's all this book is about) difficult at times, this book is *definitely* for you.

To be clear: this book isn't about "management" the way most business publications talk about it. To them, "management" means big organizational ideas like strategy, or finance, or organizational change. If you scan the Management section of *The Wall Street Journal*, you'll see articles about those topics. That's not what this book is about. Frankly, if you're just a frontline manager, or maybe even a director, you don't need to know a lot about that kind of "management" just yet. What you do need to know about is how to manage people. If that's you, this book is for you.

This book is about managing people. It's about getting the most out of your direct reports, for two reasons: *because most managers are very bad at that part of their job, yet that's the most valuable thing they do as a manager.*

Isn't that sad? Most managers are terrible at the most important thing they're supposed to be doing: getting top performances out of the people they are managing.

In a way, though, it's not surprising. Lots of folks think getting a Master of Business Administration (MBA) will make them managers. But MBA programs don't teach much about managing people. Part of the reason for that is that many of the professors have never managed a group of people with responsibility for their output. Also, people aren't easily placed into neat conceptualized models that can be analyzed and measured. People are messy.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of managers describe their "training" this way: *I got promoted, and they didn't tell me anything about what I was supposed to do or how I was supposed to do it. They just gave me a team and wished me luck.*

One new manager I worked with, years ago at a great firm, told me that the day he got promoted, his new boss handed him a stack of folders regarding his team members, pointed to a corner of the building, and said, "Your team sits over there, by the windows."

This is mind-boggling. The upside of this, however, is that *you're not alone*. That feeling you have that others know what they're doing but you don't is wrong. *Almost everyone else doesn't know either.*

So, give yourself a break. Let yourself off the hook. You're doing a difficult job, and you haven't been given ample preparation. That's why I wrote *The Effective Manager*.

*The Effective Manager* will only concern itself with actionable guidance. Usually, I will not tell you "how to be" or "what to reflect on" or "what attitude to have." There's a part of me, after 25 years of coaching managers, that doesn't really care what kind of attitude you have, because all the attitude in the world isn't going to change the results. The only thing that will change the results is to change what you DO.

Several years ago, a senior vice president asked me to coach one of his key team members, Paul. He said that his direct (someone who reported directly to him), who was a vice president, was brilliant and had almost everything it took to be a more senior manager. The problem was that he was a horrible presenter when compared with his peers, and he would never make it to higher levels because he would have to give presentations regularly. In addition, he was a nervous presenter, and it was excruciating to be in the audience when he talked.

I asked Paul to present something for me. Yes, he was extremely nervous. There was no way Paul would be going further in his career. I still remember being amazed that he had gotten as far as he had. (His boss had sheltered him, and, frankly, it was probably a good move, as bad off as Paul was.)

I suppose I could have engaged a hypnotist, or I could have impersonated a therapist and tried to “understand” Paul’s emotional state. But, really, I didn’t care very much how nervous Paul was. What I cared about was what he *did* that made the audience think he was nervous. If I could help him eliminate all the behaviors that audiences judged as “nervous,” he would be fine.

This probably surprises you a little. But let’s do a little thought experiment. Suppose that Paul got up in front of the senior team the following week and presented brilliantly. There were no mistakes, no long embarrassing pauses, no stammering, no “deer in the headlights” moments, and not a single “ummm” or “ahhhhh . . .”

Paul’s boss would surely think, “Success!” He might even say to Paul, “You beat it! You weren’t nervous!”

But I can tell you what Paul would say: “No way. I was so nervous; I nearly threw up right before my presentation.”

Do you understand? An audience doesn’t react to a speaker’s nervousness. They react to the behaviors that they see and hear that they ascribe to nerves. If Paul is nervous but doesn’t behave as if he is

nervous, will his audience notice? Of course not. They'll think he's confident.

Suppose Paul is *not* nervous, but he engages in all the behaviors that a nervous person engages in. What is the audience going to think? That he's nervous and not confident. At the executive level, that's the kiss of death.

Success at work is about what you *do*—you are your behaviors. Almost nothing else matters. And that's what *The Effective Manager* is about.

## About Manager Tools

My firm, which I co-own with my outstanding business partner Michael Auzenne, is a management consultant firm. We coach managers and executives at firms all around the world. We train managers at firms all over the world. In 2016, we will provide all-day training sessions to over 10,000 managers at our corporate clients worldwide. We also host training conferences all over the world, where individual managers can get trained. We will conduct over 100 of these training conferences in 2016.

However, if your company cannot afford to send you to training (we do offer a discount if you want to pay yourself), *every bit of guidance in this book is available for free in our podcast, Manager Tools*. You can find the podcast on iTunes and at [www.manager-tools.com](http://www.manager-tools.com).

As of this writing, our podcasts are downloaded about a million times a month, in virtually every country in the world. We've won many Podcast Awards over the years, thanks to our loyal audience.

Our podcast is free because the mission of our firm is to make every manager in the world effective, and many of them can't afford to buy this book.

Periodically, I will encourage you to go to our website for more guidance. I can't put all the podcasts in here—there are, at the time of this publishing, close to 1,000 of them. You'll see many instances



of There's a Cast for That™ throughout this book. There are links to additional free content in our podcasts on our website.

I encourage you to visit [www.manager-tools.com](http://www.manager-tools.com) and learn even more. Click on the “There's a Cast for That™” link near the top right of our home page for a full listing of all of the podcasts cited in the *The Effective Manager*.

## A Note about Data

For the past 25 years, we've been testing various managerial behaviors and tools to see which work and which don't. I used to hate it when the manager training I received, or the books I read, basically were filled with someone's opinions, or they proffered an idea and then used a few anecdotes to support the person's position. We at Manager Tools like the aphorism, “The plural of anecdote is not data.”

We have tested and refined all of the four primary recommendations given in this book. We have tested or surveyed over 91,000 managers at various times, for various behaviors, responses, and outcomes.

In many tests, we track results and retention of managers in both a test group and an unchanged control group. This is especially true of the Four Most Effective Behaviors. We have also tested many of the *phrases* that we recommend you use. Our tests show a slight difference in responses, for instance, when using the phrases, “Would you please . . . ?” and “Would you . . . ?” We recommend using “Would you please . . . ?”

That being said, no survey can completely predict how any one manager's results, retention, or relationships will be affected by the tools we recommend. Every situation is different. Often, that's what many managers say when they come to us for help and explain their situation: “My situation is special/different/unique.” Almost always, it's not different at all. But because there's a chance that a manager's

situation is unique, we will tell you this: *Our guidance is for 90 percent of managers, 90 percent of the time.* It's possible that you're in a special situation, but I doubt it.

## A Note about Gender

You'll notice that, throughout this book, I'll use different genders for managers—sometimes male and sometimes female. All of our content at Manager Tools—all of the audio guidance in podcasts and all the “show notes”—use a nearly perfect balance of male and female examples. (If you're a male, and it seems as if there are a lot of female examples, that says more about your biases than our examples.)

The reason for using different genders for managers throughout this book is that all of our data show that men and women make equally good managers and, for that matter, executives. If you're a female manager, we're glad you're reading this book, and we're here to help.

Now, let's find out what it takes to be a good manager and *how to do it*.

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# 1

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## What Is an Effective Manager?

THERE'S A LOT OF TALK about what good management is. When someone tells you they know how to manage or what it takes to manage, ask them, "How do you measure what a good manager is, or does?" If you don't get a crisp answer (like the one I outline below), don't take what they tell you very seriously.

I suspect you've known both good and bad managers. What makes them so? Is it what they do? How they think? Their personality? What they feel? Where they went to school?

Think about this for a minute: *How do you know someone is a good manager? What is the definition of a good manager?*

When we ask these questions at our Effective Manager Conferences, we get all kinds of answers, such as the following:

- Their people like them.
- They communicate a lot.
- They're smart.
- They CARE.
- They listen well.
- They are respected.

These are good efforts, but they're still incorrect.

Suppose a manager reported to you who did or embodied all of the above, and for the past three years, *he had never achieved a single objective that the organization had set for him*. Would you describe him as a good manager? Of course you wouldn't.

### **Your First Responsibility as a Manager Is to Achieve Results**

This may be the most important concept related to being a manager. Your first responsibility is NOT to your team of directs. It's NOT to your people. You should NOT worry about them first.

Your first responsibility is to deliver whatever results your organization expects from you. Whether you're a sales manager, and you have to "meet your numbers," or you're an accounting manager, and you have to "prepare the quarterlies," or you're a project manager, and you have to "deliver, on time, on budget, in scope," the thing that really matters is that you do what your company expects you to do.

For many managers, this creates a problem. You probably can't name your top five key results that you owe your organization this year. You most likely can't tick off on your fingers, *with ease*, the key things for which you're responsible. You may be able to say, "My boss wants me to focus in these areas," but that's not enough. You can't quantify what is expected of you.

About the only way to really feel good about what your responsibilities are is to have quantified goals, in numbers and percentages: "Higher than 92 percent call quality each week"; "Achieve 1.6 MM in sales"; "Maintain gross margins above 38 percent"; "Reduce shipping losses by 2.7 percent cumulatively year over year." (If not having these kinds of goals frustrates or worries you, perhaps you think that everyone else *has* clear goals. But don't worry. They probably don't either.)

The problem with not having clearly delineated responsibilities is that you can't make intelligent choices about where to focus. You begin to feel that "everything is important." You begin to "try to get everything done." Of course, you can't, and you probably know that already, because you're working long hours and never get everything done. You're not alone.

If you can't list your goals almost off the top of your head, make a note somewhere to go to your boss in the near future. Ask her: "What results do you expect of me?" "What are the measures you're going to compare me against?" "What are the objective standards?" "What subjective things do you look at to round out your evaluation of me?" (If you want to know more details about how to have this conversation, go to *There's a Cast for That*<sup>TM</sup>.)

Take notes, and go back to your desk and figure out what actions you're going to take in order to deliver those results.

A lot of managers fear this conversation. The thinking goes, "If there are no measures, they can't use them against me." But that type of thinking is shortsighted. There are always measures. If you don't know what they are, they may be being used against you. Your boss is privately and subjectively evaluating you.

Okay, so results come first. Managers who produce great results have more successful careers than those who produce average results. But even reading this statement probably bothers you a little, because you've likely met at least one manager who gets great results and does well *whom you despise*. There are managers who put results so far ahead of everything else that they justify all sorts of behaviors to achieve those results. There are even industries—Wall Street comes to mind—that are more likely to tolerate this kind of behavior from managers. When the ends justify the means for managers, bad things happen to the workers who report to them.

A focus *only* on results far too often leads to abuse of workers. The worldwide labor movement—unions—traces its beginnings to soon



after the beginning of . . . management. Managers were told, “Just get results,” and they did so, at the expense of the health and safety of their employees. So, fairly soon, the workers joined forces.

## **Your Second Responsibility as a Manager Is to Retain Your People**

Effectively managed modern organizations now measure *retention* in addition to results when they are evaluating a manager. It’s intended to be a brake against an unrelenting results focus. They want to ensure that a manager’s team members don’t leave the organization.

Replacing employees is expensive. When someone leaves, there’s the lost work that had been planned for, the cost of interviewing in both money and time, the likely higher salary that will be paid in the event of replacement, the time and expense of training the new employee, and the cost of less productivity by the new employee until that person can match the quality and quantity of work of the person who has left.

For today’s manager, it’s not enough to get results.

## **The Definition of an Effective Manager Is One Who Gets Results and Keeps Her People**

In the best companies in the world, when executives get together to review the talent of their managers, the results and retention of managers are always at the heart of the discussion. When there’s a discussion about who is best, who deserves a promotion, and who is “ready now” or going to be “ready next,” these two metrics come up over and over again: *How well did this manager do her job, as shown in her results? Did she retain her people?*

If you want to be an effective manager and if you want to maximize your job security (and, I would argue, your professional satisfaction), you’ve got to achieve these two metrics. You’ve got to