



How to Develop Competent Managers and Supervisors

Some people have the title of “manager” yet never seem to effectively fulfill the managerial role. They never move up to thinking and acting like managers. To be deemed fully competent, managers and supervisors must effectively model the Eight Core Competencies of Management.

By Mac McIntire

Every organization has its share of good managers and bad managers. Unfortunately, in some companies the number of bad managers far exceeds the number of good ones.

Some people have the title of “manager” yet never seem to effectively fulfill the managerial role. They never move up to thinking and acting like managers. Instead they are mere glorified workers, receiving supervisory pay but doing very few supervisory tasks. They still do the work, but do very little managing.

How can you tell if you are a real manager?

True managers, good managers, competent managers, know how to manage. They know how to motivate their employees to perform at the desired level and can maintain that performance continually. They communicate their expectations and hold people accountable for their actions. They regularly assess the performance of their employees and give constant feedback so people know where they stand at all times. They recognize the accomplishments of their workers and actively coach people who need improvement. They take their employees to the next level so no one stagnates in their job.

Eight Core Competencies

Based upon my observations of good and bad managers over the past 35 years, I’ve identified *Eight Core Competencies of Management*® that separate real managers from those who are managers in title only (see graphic). The extent to which you model these eight competencies is the extent to which you are a good manager. The extent to which you are weak in these areas is the extent to which you are a poor manager. If you

cannot perform these eight tasks competently, you are not really *managing*, regardless of your title.

The first quality of management competency is the ability to clearly and specifically **identify the performance you expect** from your employees. This includes the specific job skills, job knowledge, work behaviors and attitude necessary to perform at the desired level. This competency literally entails the ability to identify how you want your employees to look, sound, feel and act like while they are performing their job tasks. It is the ability to stipulate exactly what you want, when you want it, how you want it, where you want it, and why.

It is almost impossible for employees to perform at an acceptable level if expectations are not clear – unless you actually expect a low level of performance. Of course, only an incompetent manager would accept unsatisfactory performance from those within their stewardship.

The second competency of true management is the ability to effectively **communicate what you want** to your employees so they know exactly what is expected. This is more than just telling your workers what you want. It is communicating your performance and behavioral expectations so completely

there is no possible confusion about what the employees need to do to perform well.

The best time to communicate your expectations is while you are interviewing job candidates for open positions. It lets people know *before* they are hired what is expected and helps you, and the potential employee, determine whether the individual is a match for the organization.

Once employees are already on staff, communicating performance expectations is an ongoing process. It continues with new employee orientation, is reinforced during on-the-job

Eight Core Competencies of Management

Identify what you want

Communicate what you want

Hire what you want
or
Train to what you want

Provide the information, tools, resources, and incentive
so employees can give you what you want

Measure and monitor performance to assess
whether or not you are getting what you want

Provide feedback

Recognize and reward those who give you what
you want or coach, counsel and discipline those
who don't give you what you want

Provide developmental and career opportunities
so you can get more of what you want

training, and is a significant part of the daily interactions between you and your employees. Performance expectations ought to be reinforced in staff meetings, emphasized in interoffice memorandums, and noted in departmental and company publications.

Once you know the exact performance you want and can communicate it to others, you now can either [hire what you want](#) or [train to what you want](#).

It would be wonderful, of course, if you could find enough people who already match your expectations, and then just hire them. But usually that's not possible. Consequently, as a manager you need the skill to both hire the right people and to train less skilled workers so they can attain the level of performance you expect.

It takes a special skill to be able to identify during the interview process the exact qualifications and competencies job candidates possess. Many candidates are adept at telling you what you want to hear during the interview while hiding their weaknesses. Later, after these individuals are on staff, you discover you purchased a flawed product. When that happens, you need to be skilled in raising the proficiency of less competent employees through properly designed and executed training processes. Competent managers are good trainers. They have the ability to take people who lack the proper skills, knowledge and abilities and raise those individuals to a higher level of proficiency. Competent managers have structured processes to orient and train new employees and certify they can perform at acceptable levels.

During the hiring and training processes you also need to [provide the employees with the information, tools and resources](#) they need to perform to the expected level. Employees who lack adequate information, tools or resources cannot perform their jobs well regardless of their skills, knowledge and abilities. The quality of a chef's food is only as good as his pots and pans. A front desk clerk at a hotel cannot go any faster than her computer. The checkout lines at the grocery store are as long or short as the number of cashiers on staff allows. A salesperson cannot effectively sell merchandise without good product information.

After your employees are hired, trained and performing their job tasks, you should regularly [measure and monitor employee performance to ensure you are getting what you want](#). This is more than empirical or assumptive analysis. It is the ability to competently assess the cause and effect relationship between what an employee does and what he or she produces. It is the ability to discern

outcomes and results as they directly correlate to the actions and performance of the employee.

The ability to tell exactly how an employee achieved his or her results is a key component of managing performance. If you, as a manager, lack the competency to identify how work behaviors impact production, you have no way to replicate the behaviors that achieve positive outcomes. You also lack the insight to discard behaviors that are non-productive or dysfunctional. Competent managers are adept at measuring performance. They constantly monitor each employee to ensure he or she is performing to standard.

As you measure and monitor employee performance you also need the ability to [give effective feedback](#) to your workers. Not surprisingly, many managers are deficient in this core management competency. Some managers seem incapable of expressing their gratitude and appreciation to those employees who perform well. They act as if their feedback philosophy is one of "no news is good news." Other managers are hesitant to reprimand employees who need corrective counseling. They act as if ignoring the problem will somehow make it go away.

Competent managers, the ones who really are managing, constantly interact with their employees. They reinforce and encourage workers who are doing well. They give ongoing support, guidance and instruction to those who need improvement. They are not hesitant to confront poor performers. They do not shirk the primary responsibility of a manager, which is to ensure employees are continually performing at the desired level.

This means to be an effective manager you must have the ability to [recognize and reward those who give you what you want](#) or to [coach, counsel, discipline or terminate those who don't](#).

Amazingly, some managers reward employees regardless of the level of their performance. They write generic performance appraisals and give blanket pay increases with no noticeable link to actual performance. They allow off-purpose behaviors and unacceptable job performance to continue rather than confronting problem employees. Or, worse yet, they ignore both poor performers and exceptional employees, creating disheartening conditions where good performance goes unrewarded and bad performance goes unchecked.

Competent managers let people know where they stand. They reinforce good performance and correct those who may be off track. They provide ongoing feedback to each employee. They never allow an employee to wander from the desired path. They are so clear in their feedback employees

never wonder where they are. Each employee knows at all times if he or she is winning.

Finally, the last competency is the ability to [provide career counseling and developmental opportunities](#) so your employees can give you even more of what you want. Competent managers don't allow their employees to plateau. They make sure employee performance gets better year-over-year. They expect their employees to continuously improve and ensure it happens by managing competently.

The level of your success, or competency, as a manager is determined by whether you *increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your employees so they can produce more*. Your success is measured by your employees' success. The more productive they are, the more competent you are as a manager.

You were hired to improve your department, to take it to the next level, to go beyond what is currently being done. Your department, and each employee within it, ought to be better because of *you*. Ask yourself whether your department is better now, with you as the manager, than it was before you became the department head. Is it better now than it was last year? Are your subordinates better than they were before you became their leader? Are your employees better this year than they were last year?

Competent managers constantly assess the strengths and weaknesses of their employees. They understand each employee's known and potential capabilities. They meet with their employees to discuss their personal and professional goals. They know what each person wants to achieve in his or her career. Good managers help their employees map out a developmental plan and/or career path. They design developmental opportunities that raise their employees to the next level and get them to produce even more for the company.

That's it! Eight competencies. Eight qualities that determine whether you are a competent manager.

To be deemed a *competent* manager you must be proficient in all eight of these critical skills. A weakness in one or more of the core competencies will adversely impact any relative strength in the others. Your adeptness at giving feedback is diminished if you haven't clearly communicated what you want beforehand. Being good at measuring and monitoring performance is meaningless if your recognition and reward systems are not tied to specific results. And, of course, if you can't hire properly or train your employees to perform at acceptable levels, all of your competently designed discipline processes will be of little worth.

One last critical point. Competent managers constantly monitor their own performance. They

introspectively assess whether or not they are doing all they can to competently manage their employees. They realize that competent employees are a result of competent management.

Training Instills Competencies

If you are lacking in any of these eight competencies, Innovative Management Group offers a three-day intensive management training course, called the *Accountability Management Workshop™* that focuses on the eight core competencies of management. At the core of the workshop is a powerful explanatory model called the *Ladder of Commitment®*. This insightful tool explains how to get high levels of enthusiasm and commitment from employees by addressing the things that matter most in the workplace.

To perform well employees need information about the goals and direction of the business. They need clarification of their roles, responsibilities, performance expectations and authority level in order to perform to exemplary standards. They also need accurate feedback so they can either continue their productive actions or cease off-purpose performance that is below standard.

During the workshop you are given other helpful diagnostic and intervention tools to better manage your employees' performance. IMG's *Six Block Model™* shows you how to discern the true root cause of performance problems so you can focus your energy on correct interventions. The *Field of Play™* lays out exact performance expectations, standards and boundaries so there is no confusion on what performance is required.

Finally, almost one-third of the workshop deals with teaching you how to give effective performance feedback to your employees. Obviously there is no accountability if people are not held accountable. A major part of management accountability is meeting face to face with your employees so they can report on their work-related stewardship. Managers who fail to regularly meet with their employees one-on-one to address performance issues are not really managing.

One of the great drawbacks to management training and a primary reason why managers often fail to implement what they learn is the lack of time at work to alter their management practices. Most managers today are working managers. They not only manage, they also have to perform tasks and produce output similar to their employees. Thus, they are required to both *work* and *manage*. Unfortunately, given limited time during the work day, most managers tend to focus on getting the work done and neglect the management aspects of their job.

The *Accountability Management Workshop* is designed so you not only learn the eight core

management competencies, but you actually create your performance management structure and framework *during* the session. This means less “office time” outside of the training is spent on the administrative tasks that are required to establish the foundation of a comprehensive performance management system. Most of the “work” necessary to manage people is accomplished in the workshop. You leave the session fully prepared and ready to manage. You leave holding yourself accountable to perform your role and truly become a competent manager. §

If you would like more information about Innovative Management Groups' highly-effective *Accountability Management Workshop*, which provides managers with the tools and skills of all eight management competencies, please call us at 702-258-8334 or by e-mail at mac@imglv.com. Also visit our website at www.imglv.com

If you would like to find out how to create competent employees, email me and I will send you a free copy of my article entitled: “*How to Create Competent Employees.*”

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