

A WEEK IN *Learning*

Manager 101: Paradigm Shift

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Being a manager has never been easy, but the burdens that come with being a first-time manager, or a manager entering a new department, can sometimes be even more overpowering. You worked so hard to prove that you “have what it takes” to be the next *Gladiator*- the manager that outlasts every organizational challenge and ferocious deadline tossed your way. Now that you have the position, it is time to do what gladiators do - it is time to slay. The challenges encountered may be unique to your department, but no matter where you work, those challenges will depend on your level of managerial maturity.

Managerial maturity has less to do with how long you have been a manager, but more to do with your philosophy or paradigm on management. A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that creates a way of viewing reality. For example, if you subscribe to a traditional, top-down approach to management, you believe that executive leaders should decide on behalf of the people. Additionally, managers control assets and workers, while HR teams hand out incentives, or consequences, accordingly.

This model for management, popularized during the industrial revolution, worked well for monitoring factory workers. However, the world is changing. Our society has been shifting away from factory workers and leaning toward knowledge workers, which are people whose main capital is knowledge. Businesses recognize the need to recruit this new type of worker, but many have not questioned if their “industrial revolution” paradigm will work with these new workers.

When the usual way of thinking about, or doing, something is replaced by a new and different method, we call that a *Paradigm Shift*. Why should this matter to the new manager, or any manager? Quite naturally, your personal experiences and management paradigm will become the lens from which you view your team and yourself. So, if you truly want to unleash the power in the people on your team, your management paradigm should define them as *collaborators* and not simply *workers*. In the *7 Habits for Managers* series, Steven Covey defines the two most common management mistakes:

- ***Trying to manage others before managing yourself.*** This relates directly to character development. Essentially, you must get your “own” act together, before expecting a change from other people.



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- **Trying to manage people, instead of letting them manage themselves.** Managers should never have to manage people. People manage themselves against shared criteria, mutually agreed upon.

Right now, you may be asking yourself, “What does working on myself and giving people more freedom have to do with slaying my objectives?” Absolutely everything. If you want to be consistently successful in meeting your organizational objectives, you will need to unleash the greatest weapon you have - your team.

Regarding managerial maturity, the Covey model classifies managerial styles into three types:

- **Dependent Managers-** This group of managers take no initiative to resolve issues. They depend on others for direction and resources. They often blame others, or circumstances, when things go wrong.
- **Independent Managers-** This group of managers do not depend on others. They often want to “do it all themselves” and do not believe their direct reports can contribute much to strategy or solutions. This type of manager is heard saying, “If I do it myself, it will be done right, on-time, etc.”
- **Interdependent Managers-** This group of managers rely on the strength of the team. They know their team members well and are eager to release their full potential.

If you are a manager, today I want to challenge you to explore your personal management paradigm and rate your managerial maturity. What is one thing you can do to unleash the power of your team? Can you name one area of opportunity for improving how you express your leadership? If you find that it is time for a paradigm shift in your thinking, I encourage you to take on that challenge – be that gladiator!

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