

Making It Run Isn't Running It

The Difference Between Doing And Managing Marketing

In the early, primitive days of marketing professional services, there weren't enough people doing marketing for law, accounting, and consulting firms to think much about departmental management. The exceptions, of course, were the larger firms, particularly those for whom, in the beginning, having more people on staff was readily equated to better marketing. Marketing, at the beginning, was invariably assigned to a partner, who had only a vague idea about marketing and the marketing process.

This practice still exists today, although to a lesser extent than before, and with a far greater sophistication. After all this time, some – not all, but some – professionals have learned better.

Where this still exists, it usually represents a traditional distrust in a law and accounting firms of any non-lawyer or non-accountant in the professional office. And by now, many more lawyers and accountants than ever before are beginning to learn about marketing.

At the same time, as marketing is increasingly integrated into the practice, more and more marketing professionals are being put in a position to manage, more professionals have learned how to deal with professional marketers. Unfortunately, such is the nature of marketing that few marketers are trained for managing. When you do get a good manager, the chances are that it's luck, not skill in hiring.

And bad managers, no matter how skilled they are in their occupations, as either professionals or marketers, are a disaster. But one thing is certain -- the ability to perform the marketing process is not the same as the ability to manage that performance in others. The mistake comes in giving management responsibility to superior performers, without understanding the difference between the ability to *do* and the ability to *manage*.

Without doing a full treatise on management -- the library is full of good books on it -- there are some simple factors that should be considered before awarding management responsibility. They begin with understanding what managing is and isn't.

What Managing Is

What managing *is* and what managers *are* are two different things. There are as many definitions as there are definers, but essentially, managing is getting things done, the way they should be done, to effectively accomplish a predetermined objective, with the help of other people. What managing *isn't* is bossing people around.

Managing is at least...

- Understanding the objectives of your firm

- Understanding the objectives of the marketing department, in terms of the firm's objectives
- Understanding how to plan the program, and the project within the program, in terms of all these objectives
- Understanding how to allocate tasks to members of a staff, based on each member's skills and abilities
- Understanding how to motivate staff members to fulfill those tasks effectively, successfully, and enthusiastically
- Understanding how to measure the results of each staff person's actions and performance, and how to express either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with performance without attacking the individual

If you accept this definition -- and of course, it's shorthand, because there are many more nuances to it -- then the list of skills for a marketing manager comes clear.

For the partner in charge of marketing, all of the foregoing applies as well, with three more responsibilities...

- Understanding both the basic skills of marketing and the objectives of the marketing program
- Serving as liaison between the marketers and the partnership
- Transmitting the firm's objective and culture to the marketing director

The partner responsible for the marketing process cannot and should not second guess the professional marketer. If the marketing director can't relate effectively to the firm's culture or objectives, the marketer should be fired. If the marketing professional allows himself or herself to be second guessed, the result is going to be disaster, and the marketing professional should quit.

Keep in mind that there's a difference between managing marketers and managing staff in other kinds of organizations. The added ingredients are...

- Marketers deal in concepts that require both skill and imagination. Marketing is based on not only techniques, but on original ideas and concepts as well
- Goal concepts -- and therefore, success -- are measured differently, and usually on a shorter term. Making a sale is one thing, but measuring the success of a public relations activity is something else. Is a press release successful because it gets published -- or because it contributes effectively to supporting other marketing activities?
- The background and training of marketing people, who don't have the formal qualifications of other professionals, and the body of marketing knowledge, which is not codified as are law and accounting, differs from the background of the

professionals who hire them. Marketers come from a different world, and must be managed differently

These factors, by the way, are why non-accountants, non-lawyers, and non-consultants often find a hostile environment in accounting, law, and consulting firms.

The basic skills needed by managers of marketing personnel go well beyond the simplistic "ability to manage people." (And making lists and timetable isn't planning.) The skills include the ability to...

- Recognize marketing opportunities and problems to be solved, and to prioritize them. There are always more marketing problems -- and opportunities -- than any marketing department can address. As many of these situations as possible should be anticipated and dealt with. This is a crucial part of *planning*.
- Choose solutions to those problems, and approaches to the opportunities, and prioritize them. This, too, is part of planning
- Make choices and decisions, given an array of solutions. And this is the ultimate skill in planning
- Allocate the right task to the right individual, and to explain clearly what is to be done, how, and by when
- Motivate people -- to want them to succeed for their own well-being and satisfaction -- to engender enthusiasm -- to demonstrate respect for each staff person's skills and individuality. Inherent in this is the ability to inspire and drive people to success, to loyalty, to a sense of participation in a team (in which the abilities and rights and egos of other members of the team are duly considered.) Good team members don't compete with one another -- they support each other.
- Measure performance, and reward appropriately

Oddly enough, there are specific factors that preclude good management, and show a complete lack of ability to manage. For example ...

- Being unable to motivate and direct people of not only diverse personalities, but of personalities that you may not like socially. *Personal chemistry* is an overrated concept. A good manager should be able to deal with a talented person, even if it's someone who he or she might not necessarily want to socialize with.
- Competing with one's own staff. The manager should be sufficiently secure emotionally to allow staff the opportunity to excel, and to take credit for its own excellence.
- The competent manager need not know how to do everything -- but rather, how everything is *done*.
- Teamwork is good, but it shouldn't be mistaken for homogenization. In an arena such as marketing, in which ideas and originality matter, the ability to understand and

accept idiosyncrasy is important, so long as the attendant behavior isn't disruptive to the point of being counterproductive.

- Confusing *being temperamental* with *temperament* doesn't help much, either. Screaming fits don't seem to accomplish much.
- There are people who think that managing by sadism accomplishes something. It does for the sadist, and maybe for the masochist -- but not for the business. Ruling by terrorizing, by threatening, or by having two people compete against one another by giving them both the same task, may do something for the personality of the manager, but doesn't do a thing for the business
- Indecisiveness and inconsistency both preclude good management. The leader who can't make a decision, and the leader who makes the decision one way today and another way tomorrow, is no leader. He or she is a perpetrator of chaos.

Motivation is a skill not often enhanced by long cheer leader speakers in offsite seminars. A complex process, it includes understanding personality, effective communication, and a genuine and palpable desire to see each individual on the team succeed.

Entire books have been written about managing, and you can major in it at your local MBA program. But pragmatically, other factors, such as those just detailed, must be used to make a decision about who to hire as a manager, or to promote a performer to management responsibilities.

How To Hire A Manager

How do you hire a manager, then? Or promote a performer to a manager?

- If you're running a marketing operation, and understand the marketing qualifications of a candidate, then use the foregoing as a checklist.
- If you're a non-marketer hiring a marketing manager, then preface the foregoing checklist by being sure the candidate understands the difference between marketing a professional service, and marketing anything else. Even the best of corporate and product marketers fail when they don't understand that difference.

The problem is that marketing isn't a science -- it's a skill that's enhanced by artistry. So, too -- unfortunately -- is management.

It's artists managing artists, then, which could be a new formula for making a bomb -- or for finding the cure for the common cold. Which means that in hiring managers, you can't abdicate your intelligence or your instincts. Checklists will take you as far as the gate, and directly to it, but they won't always get you successfully through it. Thoughtfulness and good instincts will, though.

Of the hundreds of books and millions of words written on leadership and management, few are content to reduce the basics of leadership to a few simple precepts. What really succeeds in leading and managing a company ? At least...

- Relevance to your markets
- Ability to listen – externally and internally
- Ability to move teams in the right direction
- Ability to administer without destroying people or process
- Ability to change to reflect changing market needs
- Ability to be comfortable taking rational risk
- Perspective to see and balance variables and random factors that unexpectedly arise
- Ability to recruit, marshal and focus talent economically and efficiently
- Ability to keep calm and think rationally in the middle of a crisis
- And one intangible – talent, which includes intuition, which if you have it, will undoubtedly lead you to all of the above

Can it be learned? You can try. It may work for you.

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