



Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

• See a sample reprint in PDF format.

• Order a reprint of this article now

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

IN THE LEAD | August 11, 2008

Effective Management Remains An Art Steeped in Good Relationships



By CAROL HYMOWITZ

A wise friend of mine believes that the hardest part of marriage isn't learning how to get along with your spouse, but rather coming to grips with what you learn about yourself as you relate to your wife or your husband. I think managers face the same challenge.

During my first week as this newspaper's bureau chief in Pittsburgh in what was my first management job, a young reporter sought my feedback about a feature story she had written. I quickly ticked off all the things she needed to do to improve the story -- in the same sharply critical way I often reviewed my own work.

Then I glanced up and saw the crestfallen, anxious expression on her face. I realized that if I wanted creative and hard-working employees, I needed to keep my style in check and to make sure that I applauded my staff's strengths as much as I targeted their weaknesses.

Lessons in Leadership >

A leadership guide featuring step-by-step how-tos, Wall Street Journal stories and video interviews with CEOs.

My experiences as a manager prompted me to launch this column almost a decade ago. I wanted to learn more about how leaders inspire those who follow them to take risks and to do more than they ever thought

possible, and about how they convince employees that while failure is permissible, success is expected.

The more executives I interviewed and wrote about, the more I realized that the most effective ones review their own performance at least as frequently and as thoroughly as they review the work of their employees. They also constantly adapt their management styles to meet different challenges and to motivate different employees.

In a column published in November 2005, I wrote about how Selena Lo, CEO of Ruckus Wireless in Sunnyvale, Calif., changed from being a brusque, temper-tantrum-prone manager. Early in her career, she often banged her fist on conference tables to

press her point of view, she said. Then she became CEO of Ruckus. There was no boss who "cleaned up after me and soothed people who felt I was steamrolling them," she said. She realized that as the top boss, she needed to delegate a lot of work but to "stop scaring people and give them room to make their own decisions."

When several new hires told her they didn't like her name for the company, Video54, she told them to come up with a new one -- and agreed Ruckus was better.

In a June 2004 column, Novartis Chairman and CEO Daniel Vasella disclosed that before he became an executive, he had been a physician and a psychoanalyst. In business, he didn't want to be his employees' therapist, he said, but he used his analytical listening skills when conferring with managers or interviewing prospective hires. "I ask myself, 'am I interested, relaxed, tense or bored -- and what is this person doing to make me feel one way or the other?'"

Some of the best leadership models are from outside business. In a January 2007 column, I wrote about how Tony Dungy, head coach of the Indianapolis Colts who led his team to victory in the Super Bowl last year, pushes his players hard but doesn't curse at them, chew them out, or speak to them sarcastically -- unusual behavior in the National Football League's scream-and-holler culture.

There is widespread cynicism in the ranks of many companies. At a time when no job is secure, many top executives still get steep salaries regardless of performance and golden parachutes after they're dismissed.

The best leaders recognize this attitude and studiously avoid being self-absorbed. They celebrate their employees' ideas, knowledge and commitment, and they understand they must be both bold and kind to attract talent.

Among leaders like these are Procter & Gamble CEO A.G. Lafley, who assembles diverse teams of employees around the world and tells them to worry about pleasing consumers, not him; Rite Aid CEO Mary Sammons who acknowledges to employees that she has made mistakes -- and learned from them -- during her career; and General Electric CEO Jeffrey Immelt, who doesn't hesitate to show weak-performing executives the door, but often gives them time to find a new job elsewhere to avoid any humiliating public firings.

So much has changed in business since In the Lead launched, from the growth of the Internet to the new emphasis on corporate governance. But my original premise -- that management is more an art than a science, highly dependent on relationships -- has not, even as this column comes to a close. For me, exploring the art of management has been an extraordinary privilege and incredible fun.

- To see past columns, go to WSJ.com/careers. Email Carol Hymowitz at inthelead@wsj.com.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com