

Managers as Developers of Others: A literature review

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Managers as Developers of Others:

A literature review

This paper, is part of the output of an IES research project on 'Managers as Developers of Others'. Two companion papers are also available. *Managers as Developers of Others: Main findings of an IES research study*, presents a summary of the findings of the fresh empirical work undertaken by IES and *Managers as Developers of Others: Personal experiences of pleasure and pain* presents extracts of the narrative accounts collected in that research. This paper contains the following sections:

1. The growing role of the line manager in development
2. Managers as career developers
3. Managers as mentors and coaches for staff
4. The business importance of managers as developers
5. Developing the competency to develop others
6. Barriers to staff development
7. Relation to management theories and formal frameworks
8. Summary and conclusion

1. The growing role of the line manager in development

Developing people devolved to line managers

In recent years, it has become apparent that, in many organisations, the responsibility for employee development is being devolved to line managers (Hyman and Cunningham, 1998). Salaman (1995) contends that the pivotal role of today's managers is to '*support the management of performance or the management of learning.*' So managers are under increasing pressure to manage the learning process for other employees. A recent training and development survey by CIPD (2003) gauged the extent to which line managers themselves are now driving development activities. Indeed, this study demonstrated that there has been a considerable devolution of responsibility for staff development to line managers in all sectors.

What managers need to develop others

IES' own research has surveyed organisational views concerning the particular competencies that managers require to manage effectively. These include: the ability to plan ahead, to see the bigger picture and to manage relationships. More specifically, there has been a shift from the role of the 'manager as a controller' to that of a coach or mentor, of which developing employees is a major part (Tamkin *et al.*, 2003). Despite this, there has been little empirical research that specifically deals with the role of managers

Table 1: Managerial skills/behaviours which facilitate and inhibit employee development

	Category	Skills/Behaviours
Facilitative:	Caring	Supporting Encouraging Being approachable Reassuring Being committed/involved Empathising
	Informing	Sharing knowledge
	Being professional	Role Modelling Standard-setting Planning & preparing
	Advising	Instructing Coaching Guiding Counselling
	Assessing	Providing feedback and recognition Identifying development needs
	Thinking	Reflective or Prospective Thinking Clarifying
	Empowering	Delegating Trusting
	Developing developers	Developing developers
	Challenging	Challenging
	Inhibitory:	Not giving time
Being dogmatic		Prescribing way to carry out tasks
Controlling		Not letting go Not delegating
Not thinking		Being overly directive Not Clarifying
Being task-orientated		Not focusing on development
Being unassertive		Not listening Not encouraging Being aggressive
Withholding information		Transmitting incomplete information Limiting exposure to new experiences
Not assessing		Failing to recognise needs Failing to provide feedback

Source: Adapted from Beattie, 2002

as developers of other staff. In terms of a definition, developing others is a managerial competency that relates to helping employees gain knowledge and skills, developing more effective procedures, and overcoming barriers that hinder performance:

'Managers who are good at developing their employees try to place them in situations that challenge them and that will lead to improvement. They help employees identify strengths and weaknesses, and compel them to plan about how to improve their weaknesses and develop their strengths. The best developers invest fully in their employees' success. They give accurate feedback and help people overcome their barriers.' (Zwell, 1999)

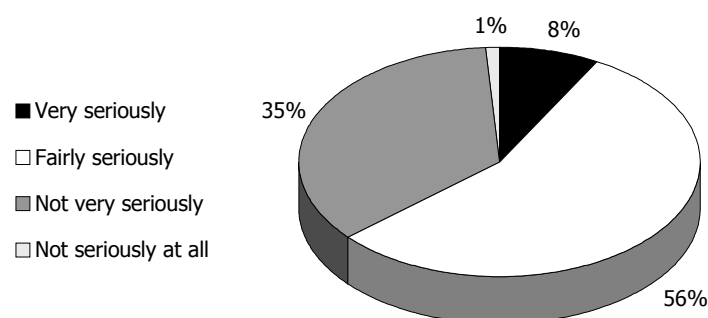
In a recent qualitative investigation by Beattie (2002), semi-structured interviews and analysis of critical incidents were used to identify managerial behaviours that either facilitated or inhibited the development of other employees (see Table 1). These skills/behaviours identified by Beattie provide a general overview of what makes an effective, or ineffective, developer of others.

How do line managers respond to this responsibility?

With a shift in development responsibility to line managers, it would be expected that this would also be reflected in the attitudes of line managers towards training and development. Indeed, evidence – at least from HR people – suggests that line managers seem serious in their approach to training and development (CIPD, 2003). Figure 1 illustrates how seriously line managers took staff development, as perceived by the CIPD respondents, who were HR people. Over 35 per cent of participants reported that line managers take training and development very seriously, whereas only nine per cent are either not very serious or not serious at all. The majority of respondents (56 per cent) reported that line managers took training and development fairly seriously.

However, despite line managers' generally positive attitudes towards training and development as shown above, only 12 per cent of the HR respondents felt that line managers were sufficiently involved with training and development activities.

Figure 1: How seriously do line managers take staff development?



Source: CIPD, 2003

Taken together, this evidence suggests that the positive attitudes espoused by line managers themselves may not be adequately reflected in their own practice.

2. Managers as career developers

The role of managers as developers is not only limited to the short-term development of staff in their current jobs. Some authors have argued that employees also require information and advice regarding their careers in order to manage their own development effectively. For example, Hirsh *et al.* (2001) demonstrated that effective career discussions often lead to practical actions and can be highly motivating for employees. More specifically, their examination of 250 particular career development conversations in five major employing organisations showed that, not only did the majority of discussions take place outside of any formal HR processes, but that only 20 per cent of these career conversations were with their direct line manager. The majority of the discussions took place with other managers within the organisation.

The same study also found that 'practical action' resulted from about three-quarters of positive career discussions, *eg* a job move or development activity. The four main types of impact of the effective career discussions were:

- a clearer future career direction
- self-insight
- information about career opportunities
- psychological benefit *ie* generally feeling good.

In terms of what makes the career discussion effective, in general, the most important requirements for providers were:

- the provider's personal qualities (employees valued managers being frank and honest, particularly in giving constructive feedback about skills and potential)
- challenging the receiver and offering advice where appropriate
- using interpersonal skills to facilitate the discussion
- providing information about opportunities.

The most experienced providers of career support saw career discussion as part of developing the potential of employees (*ie* maximising their business contribution over time) but even more as an essential component of a motivational style of leadership (*ie* maximising their engagement). They believed that the motivational impact of being attentive to employees' concerns about their careers had a powerful business benefit.

3. Managers as mentors and coaches for staff

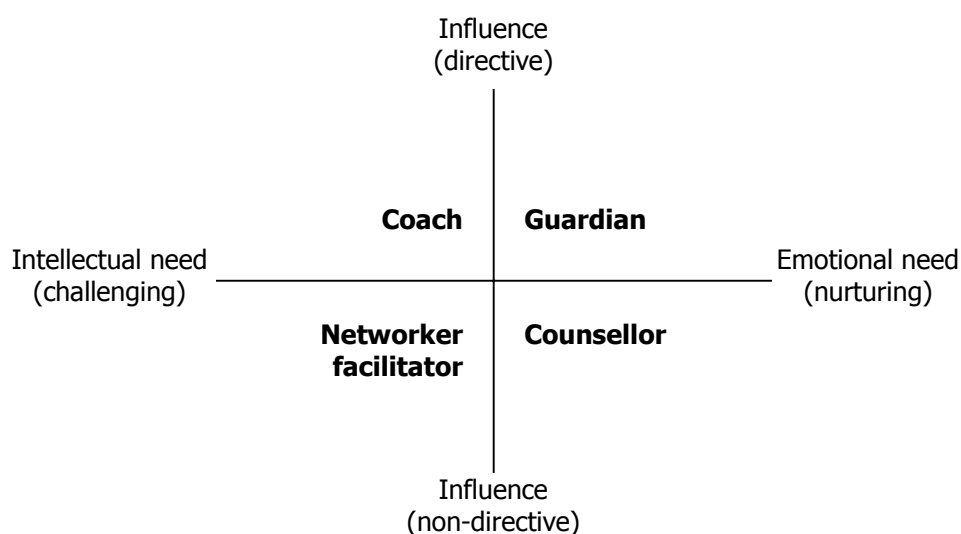
The role of line managers in both the skills development and career development of staff is widely discussed in the very large research literature on mentoring and coaching.

Clutterbuck (1998) suggests that high performing organisations retain their competitive advantage by the way in which they balance the 'soft' and 'hard' sides of people management. Clutterbuck refer to this as '*challenge versus nurturing*', that is, the combination of demanding targets with a high degree of emotional support. Challenge is closely related to the intellectual values of organisations, and nurturing to the emotional values:

'The ability to manage both the intellectual and the emotional interpretation and reaction to external stimuli is a defining characteristic of functional excellence.' (Clutterbuck, 1998)

In terms of individual relationships within the learning process, Clutterbuck suggests that the challenging-nurturing dimension can be combined with a measure of '*directive vs. non-directive*' behaviours. Directive behaviours, for example, would involve a more experienced manager setting learning goals and plans to achieve them, and giving feedback. In contrast, non-directive behaviours give responsibility for development to the learners themselves. In practice, effective development relationships function between these dimensions (see Figure 2). Each quadrant of the model defines a different form of learning relationship.

Figure 2: Dimensions of mentoring



Source: Clutterbuck (1998)

Table 2: Coaching versus mentoring

Coaching	Mentoring
Concerned with task	Concerned with implications beyond the task
Focuses on skills and performance	Focuses on capability and potential
Primarily a line manager role	Works best off-line
Agenda set by or with the coach	Agenda set by the learner
Emphasises feedback to the learner	Emphasises feedback and reflection by the learner
Typically addresses a short-term need	Typically a longer-term relationship, often for life
Feedback and discussion primarily explicit	Feedback and discussion primarily about implicit, intuitive issues and behaviours.

Source: Clutterbuck, 1998

- 1. Coach:** The coach gives the employee a task, observes and gives feedback. Although, modern approaches emphasise communication and ownership of the *issue* by the learner, the learner does not own or manage the *process*. This depends on the observational and questioning role of the coach.
- 2. Guardian:** This is someone of superiority who facilitates learning by ensuring that employees are included on high-profile, high-learning exposure projects. More typically, the guardian will be a source of advice, a role model, and a general guide through the political and practical aspects of learning.
- 3. Counsellor:** Counselling is a learner-centred method of giving support. People learn best when they have the right environment and the right frame of mind. Counselling supports the learning process by helping people examine and come to terms with their own fears, motivations, and blocks to progress.
- 4. Networker/Facilitator:** The aim of the networker/facilitator is to make the learner self-reliant in the shortest time possible. The networker side of the role helps the learners to expand their breadth of information. The facilitator side of the role helps them think through how to manage their own development.

The role of mentor is seen as represented by the entire model – a mentor can draw on any or all of these learning relationships.

There is much discussion of the relationship between coaching and mentoring. Coaching is often confused with mentoring, Table 2 emphasises the essential differences between the two roles. The main point to be aware of is that coaching is typically short-term, with a task focus. Whereas, mentoring is typically long-term with the focus placed on the individual.

4. The business importance of managers as developers

In the 1980s it was argued that poor organisational performance was due to both the poor educational attainments of managers and their low levels of training and development (Handy, 1987). As Hyman and Cunningham (1998) contend, in the 1990s, considerable attempts were made by the government and management institutions to persuade employers to systematically train and develop their managers. The message was that investment in HRM gives rise to increased business performance and flexibility.

The Institute of Management studies by Mabey and Thomson (2000), continued the series of reports started by Constable and McCormick (1987), and the Handy report (1987). The Mabey and Thomson report, on a series of surveys, highlighted that there has been:

'... significant progress in both the quantity and quality of management development in UK organisations since the mid 1980s.'
(Mabey and Thomson, 2000)

Mabey and Thomson argue that staff development has been a relatively neglected aspect of the managerial role:

'Organisations would benefit from reviewing their informal development of managers, giving special attention to the abilities of line/project managers to manage the development of their staff.'
(Mabey and Thomson, 2000)

Related research by Miller *et al.* (2001) found that managers who report higher levels, and more sophisticated processes and systems of management development also report higher business performance relative to their competitors. Despite this, however, only one-half of the 500 managers surveyed reported that their organisations were either pursuing, or had secured, Investors in People (IiP) accreditation and 63 per cent confirmed a commitment to NVQs. Only 14 per cent mentioned a commitment to the National Management Standards. Given that developing others is now an established managerial competency in IiP, NVQs and Management Standards, this may appear disappointing. However, many organisations with their own internal frameworks of managerial competencies also put a strong emphasis on people management skills, including people development.

5. Developing the competency to develop others

In a study of 17 large UK organisations, Kettley and Strebler (1997) concluded that the uncertain external environment demands managers who are flexible, adaptable, and possess particular soft skills. Highlighting the efficacy of the more personal aspects of management, one key soft skill they identified was 'developing people.' However, even though many line

managers may be aware of the importance of training and development, some authors have commented as to whether line managers are adequately prepared to conduct this role effectively.

In the CIPD Training and Development Survey (2003), only 21 per cent of participants reported that all line managers in the organisation were trained to support learning and development. Over one-third felt that only a minority of their line managers were so trained. In relation to this, with regard to the abilities and skills of line managers to support learning, over one-quarter reported that their line managers had a great deal of ability, whereas the majority thought that line managers had only some ability. Research such as this suggests that organisations have much to do in developing line management capability in this area.

Coaching for managers

So how can these skills be developed? Just as we earlier discussed the role of the manager as mentor or coach, so coaching is being used in some organisations to help managers develop the skills they need to coach others.

Coaching can be thought of as an interactive process that is designed to help individuals to develop rapidly and focuses on improving performance or behaviour (Carter, 2001). As mentioned above, there is increasing demand for managers with soft skills and yet many standard development programmes have failed to instil the kinds of approaches necessary for the development of these soft skills. Research into a range of management programmes provided by organisations (Tamkin and Barber, 1998) concludes that learning programmes which have an emphasis on feedback and learning support, such as coaching and mentoring, are best placed to create managers with soft skills.

Indeed, Carrington (2001) notes how some organisations are beginning to introduce coaching skills and techniques into line management. For example, some organisations have brought in coaching firms to help its managers to become coaches. The rationale for doing so is not to give the manager the same expertise in coaching as the coach themselves, but enough to equip them with some effective coaching techniques. For example, managers may be coached to give quality feedback, and make candid observations, that motivate employees to change their behaviour. In addition, Bianco-Mathis *et al.* (2002) have examined the 'leader as coach' and suggest useful exercises for leaders or managers wishing to develop their own coaching skills. They not only consider the coaching relationship with individuals, but also, more unusually, how this links with coaching a team and the wider support for coaching in the whole organisation.

However, Carter (2001) suggests greater clarity is needed in what is meant by managers as coaches. She views 'manager as coach' as

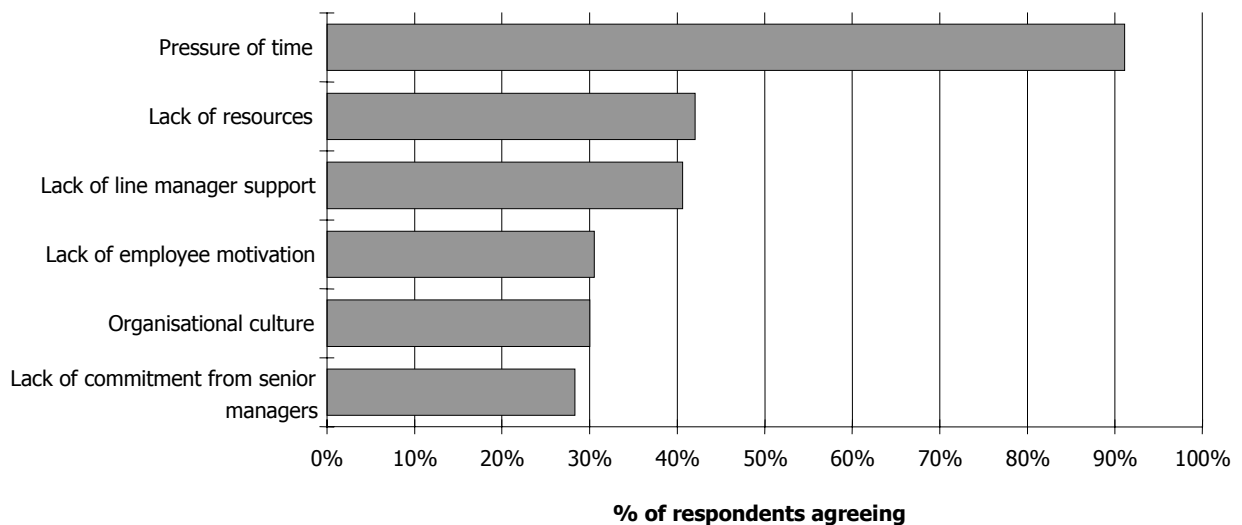
a management style aiming to help managers get more from their employees. Whereas, 'coaching a manager' emphasises what is important to the manager in their organisation. Whatever the case, there is clear evidence to indicate an increasing interest in developing the coaching skills of line managers. We are still some way, however, from being confident that we know the best way of achieving this capability.

6. Barriers to staff development

Although line management capability in producing effective training and development for their staff is important, the efficacy of line management efforts will also be influenced by external barriers. Figure 3 displays the importance of barriers to training and development as reported by CIPD (2003).

Figure 3 illustrates that line management support for learning is still a major barrier in a number of organisations. Similarly, a lack of resources can also hinder staff development efforts. However, there was a general consensus that by far the most influential barrier was the pressure of time, which was cited by over 91 per cent of participants.

Figure 3: Major barriers to effective learning



Source: CIPD, 2003

7. Relation to management theories and formal frameworks

Management theories

The importance of the competency of developing others is not a recent proposition. In fact, the competency is highlighted in many established management theories.

The learning organisation

The learning organisation (Senge, 1990) can be thought of as an organisation that facilitates the learning of all its employees and continually transforms itself. In relation to the idea of managers as developers of others, the principal characteristics of a learning organisation (IRS, 1993) include:

- Opportunities for learning, not just in a formal sense, but also from everyday actions that are debated, reviewed and questioned.
- Cultures and policies which ensure that all employees feel that they are encouraged to learn and are empowered to contribute to decisions at all levels.
- Managers who are totally committed to facilitating learning by the adoption of open and participative approaches to decision making.
- Breaking down barriers between different employees and departments to encourage open communication and ways of working.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) (Goleman, 1998) involves aspects of behaviour or personality that have relevance to behavioural competency frameworks used by organisations, and relates to 'individuals understanding and management of the emotions of themselves and others.' Goleman *et al.* (2001) report that high levels of EI create climates in which information sharing, trust, healthy risk-taking, and learning flourish. This is particularly salient with regard to relationship management (the capacity for acting in such a way that one is able to get desired results from others and reach personal goals), of which 'developing others' is a core competence.

Empowerment

The UK's track record for training and developing managers and employees had been subject to investigation in the 1980s. Subsequently, a range of initiatives was launched aiming to enhance the quality of both managers and employees (Hyman and Cunningham, 1998). A major initiative has taken place under the title of 'empowerment,' which maintains to offer autonomy and discretion to employees, and to provide ways in which to bring about change by training and supportive management styles. Hyman and Cunningham examined a number of organisations that have introduced empowering initiatives. They found that whilst individual line managers in empowering organisations perceive themselves better equipped to deal with employees than those in non-empowering organisations, deeper analysis reveals substantial problems in transforming these managers into

developers of their employees. Managers appear to be under-trained and often not motivated to develop their staff:

'Managers neglect their staff because they themselves were occupationally and professionally under-developed and they lacked the skills and motivation necessary to carry out this responsibility.'

Formal Frameworks

Miller *et al.* (2001) contend, in an analysis of 100 competency frameworks, that around half (51 per cent) of existing frameworks include some mention of *developing others*, although the way in which organisations interpreted this varied. In some organisations, the framework explicitly states that the manager concerned is expecting to become directly involved in identifying the learning needs of others, and helping to deliver training. However, in the majority of organisations, *developing others* focused mainly on creating an encouraging and supportive work environment in which employees are most likely to learn. In some organisations, the competency is essentially concerned with helping employees to accept responsibility for their own learning, creating a culture of self-development.

Similarly, in an analysis of 40 competency frameworks, Rankin (2002) found that many organisations place an emphasis on individuals having a responsibility for the development of others. This was present in 33 per cent of the competency frameworks, although a further 58 per cent incorporate this activity within a more general 'people management' competency. Some organisations placed an emphasis on the development of the individual (found in 23 per cent of frameworks).

8. Summary and conclusion

It is clear that the role of the line manager in employee development is of growing importance. Managers who excel in this regard are better equipped to identify development needs and are more aware of the development opportunities available for their staff. This is true not only for the short-term, but also for longer-term career development. However, while many managers have positive attitudes towards developing their staff, this is not always reflected in practice.

In terms of developing the staff development competency in line managers, coaching and mentoring can provide rapid development of skills and techniques, which line managers can use to be more effective developers of their staff.

Organisations that manage to achieve effective staff development by line managers will be better able to engage and motivate their staff, and to increase their business contribution.

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Further information

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