

# What skills does a manager need? essay sample

[Business](#), [Management](#)



A manager's job is complex and multidimensional, certain skills are required in order to effectively run an organisation. As used here management is the process of coordinating work activities so that they are completed efficiently and effectively with and through other people (Robbins, S., Bergman, R, Stagg, J. & Coulter, M. 2006). A manager is someone who works with and through other people by coordinating their work activities in order to accomplish organisational goals (Bergman et al., 2006). Essentially the main functions of a manager include planning, organising, leading and controlling, as researched by Henri Fayol, and in order to effectively complete these functions certain skills are required along with a division of duties among employees.

There are three levels of management beginning at first-line managers, middle managers and top managers, each have varying roles within an organization and each require diverse skills to handle the range of responsibilities that come with their role. Theorist Robert L Katz defined a skill as ' an ability which can be developed, not necessarily inborn, and which is manifested in performance, not merely in potential, thus the principal criteria of skillfulness is effective action under varying conditions. (Katz, R 1974) Katz proposed that managers require three essential skills or competencies including; technical, human and conceptual skills (Bergman et al., 2006, p 14) which are further divided among the different levels of managerial authority.

In addition to the research carried out, an interview was conducted with Mr. Mark Storey, a National manager of Myer Pty Ltd. He describes his gradual rise up the ranks of Myers from a first line manager, then onto a store

manager position and now settling in as a top national manager making nation wide impacting decisions. Furthermore he details the change of duties and skills he has experienced first hand from when he first began in 1996 and was at the lower end of the hierarchy, to 2007 where he is now at the higher end of the hierarchy.

A technical skill is the understanding of and proficiency in the performance of specific tasks, in particular skills involving methods, specialised techniques and equipment involved in specific functions, e. g. manufacturing and engineering. Technical skills also include specialised knowledge, analytical ability and the competent use of tools and techniques to solve problems (Samson, D., Daft, L., R 2003). An example of a technical skill would be the role of an accounts payable manager who must be proficient in accounting rules and be familiar with relevant forms so that they can resolve problems and answer applicable questions which would be posed to them by clients. (Bergman et al., 2006) Mr. Storey recalls his experiences as a team leader, explaining it as a far more “ hands on” approach, some of the roles included general customer service, as well as managing subordinates and delegating daily duties for a particular sub-group of the store.

Of the three skills, Katz described technical skills as perhaps the most familiar because it is the skill required of the greatest number of people (Katz, R 1974). Katz proposed that technical skills become less important as a manager moves into higher levels of management. A first line manager is a manager at the lowest level of the organisation who manages the work of non-managerial employees and is directly involved with the production or

creation of the organisations products and services, and in addition responsible for the smooth day-to-day operations in pursuit of organisational goals (Bergman et al., 2006). First line managers are considered crucial cornerstones to the success of any organisation, however such managers would be unable to effectively complete their function if it wasn't for the expertise and skills of the middle managers.

Human skill involves the manager's ability to work with and through other people, both as a group member and as a leader. This skill is demonstrated in the way a manager relates to other people, including the ability to motivate, facilitate, coordinate, lead, communicate and resolve conflicts. (Samson, D et al., 2003). Managers with effective human skills generally fabricate a more productive and engaging group of subordinates which in turn result in happier employees and healthier business performances. Once regarded as soft, human skills are now at the forefront of the management industry and are now regarded as a fundamental skill right throughout the general hierarchy of an organisation, as identified in (the 'Karpin Report'). Katz said that human skills remain just as important at the top levels as they do at the lower levels of management. In addition human skills inspire and motivate employees whether it is through general communication of positive reinforcement from management for a job well done, or as a result of customer satisfaction.

Such encouragement motivates employees to maximise their potential and reach the organisations ultimate goals of success. Whilst Human skills are a necessity in all hierarchical areas of an organisation, generally it is Middle

managers who apply this skill the most. A middle manager is someone who works at the middle levels of the organisation and is responsible for the work of lower level managers, they are primarily responsible for implementing overall organisational plans to achieve organisational goals, they are expected to establish good relationships with peers around the organisation, encourage team work and resolve conflicts (Samson, D et al., 2003). After a number of years with Myer Mr Storey was elevated to the position of store manager of the Southland store, he describes the instant change of skills required to adapt to his new role, " I was now the leader of the store and was far more dependant on my subordinates to coordinate the goals I had put in place.

Before the store opened each day I would bring in the team leaders and inform them of sales targets for the day and try and motivate them so they could perform to the best of their abilities" (Storey, M, [Myer Pty Ltd] 2007 4th August). Marks experience gives invaluable insight into the skills required by a store manager, and in particular the specific use of human skills to engage his employees. Nevertheless in order to progress higher up the rankings, conceptual skills are also required to make the ' ultimate manager'.

Managers must also have the ability to conceptualise and think laterally about abstract and complex situations, conceptual skill involves the ability to visualise the organisation as a whole, and involves the managers thinking, information processing and planning abilities as well as the ability to understand the relationship between various subunits and in addition the

capacity to comprehend how the organisation fits into the industry, the community and the broader business and social environment (Samson, D et al., 2003). Such abilities are paramount to a manager and are essential to effective decision making which is an attribute which all managers must be reasonably proficient in, hence the success of any decision depends on the conceptual skill of the people who make the decision and those who put it into action (Katz, R 1974)

Katz proposed that these skills become more important in top management positions, the reason for this is that upper level managers often deal with abstract ideas whilst lower level managers more commonly deal with observable objects and processes (Bergman et al., 2006). Top managers are responsible for the entire organisation, and for making organisation wide decisions and establishing the goals and plans that effect the entire organisation. These managers usually have titles such as: president, managing director, chief executive officer (CEO) etc. (Bergman et al., 2006).

Mr. Storey finally reached his current position as a national manager earlier this year, at first he describes how it was a little overwhelming that his input in decisions would affect all Myer stores nation wide however was soon able to view the organization as one rather than a number of independent stores. Mark details that his role now consists of more abstract thinking and creative decision making rather than the more direct limited decisions he was capable of making at his previous level. Nevertheless Conceptual skills are of paramount importance once one enters the higher end of an organisation

and sufficient indication of development in these skills is fundamental in order for a manager to progress up the managerial 'ladder'.

Essentially effective management is dependant upon three basic personal skills, technical skills; which a manager needs to accomplish the mechanics of a particular job for which he or she is responsible. Human skills; which are paramount when working with others in order to be an effective group member and build strong relationships amongst employees and to be able to build cooperative efforts among the team he/she leads. Conceptual skills; which is an essential attribute that enables managers to see the organisation as a whole and be able to make abstract decisions which in turn will result in the best outcome for the organisation and its employees (Katz, R 1974).

The relative importance of these three skills seems to vary with different levels of managerial responsibility, nonetheless conceptual skills, coupled with technical skills, human skills and a sound knowledge base, are all crucial elements in organizational performance (Bartol, K., Tein, M., Matthews, G., Martin, D., 2003). No matter what level of management or the size of the organisation, managers employ these skills; however the level of detail may vary. Different values, approaches and even styles may hinder the outcome of a goal nevertheless this progression forms a basis of what skills a manager requires.

## REFERENCE LIST

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