

WHY I DON'T WANT TO BE A MANAGER

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1. We have totally confused internal (technical) management with sales and promotion.

It is of utmost importance to me to maximize time spent on technical issues. Management of technical staff falls within this priority, but our clients tend not to be able to distinguish technical contributions from demo salesmanship. We (and they) focus on liaison, politics, and deliverable-milestone-paperwork. We (but not they) know that the mechanisms that assure mil. spec. standardization undermine serious chaotic research.

Research and client-liaison are incommensurable. Examples include:

- keeping the domain we are supposedly engineering secret from us,
- requiring massive funding of managers rather than researchers,
- expecting unachievable while politically manipulating definitions to appear to be achieving them,
- thoroughly misunderstanding that rapid-prototyping means playing with toy problems rather than quickly solving real problems, and
- treating research breakthroughs as timed deliverables.

We pretend that managers, who generally are not technically sophisticated, can design and organize technical projects. What they should do is buffer the technical staff from the client and the company. A good manager serves his/her staff. Check our position descriptions, asking "Is this job requirement of service to the staff being managed?"

--> <-- A technical manager faces inward.

<-- --> A public manager faces outward.

2. Our upper-level management does not delegate resources and authority. No one wants to manage without decision making power.

3. This company does not distinguish the client from the company. A competitive corporation would be expanding niches rather than specializing under the protection of the client. Thus, there is no potential for management growth into new areas, only potential for becoming more restricted.

4. Our upper-level management does not enthusiastically back its employee initiatives. *Employee-owned* means (if anything) that the employees are doing what they want to do. Personally, I want to do Losp. I like the company because I am doing Losp here. But, no upper-level manager has ever backed this effort. The Losp work at this company is here despite of, not because of, management support.

5. Where is our *allegiance*? Scientists love truth, businessmen love money, the company seems to love building weapon systems. I can affiliate with, and thus manage, truth and even money. But I cannot affiliate with a product which AT BEST will never be used, and at worst...

6. The company's promotional decisions are based on seniority, rather than on quality of work. (I think this is a good idea, but let's be explicit about it.)

7. The company management does not use its internal expertise to guide its policies.

8. Our management invites bottom-up structure by being indecisive. This is a technique for avoiding responsibility.

A MESSAGE TO UPPER-LEVEL MANAGEMENT

I must believe that the company is exactly as the management would have it be. That is, our managerial actions are consistent with our desires. The company does have a strongly motivated *purpose*, as measured by what we actually do. We are DoD prostitutes (although I do not wish to use the oldest profession as a derogative). We jump and struggle and stay up late at night in order to do whatever the DoD chooses to tell us to do. And we are not all that well paid.

What I do not understand is why our management does not explicitly recognize this. Come on, say it: "Our corporate objective is to enhance the DoD."

As an alternative, our corporate objective could be to enhance the employees. Imagine lots of support (IR&D, thrusts, programs...) based solely on what individual employees would like to do.

The bottom line: a *contribution* can be local or global. It takes wisdom to realize that internal support *precedes* external success.

Management rules

1. Be explicit and truthful at all times. (our grade: C)
2. Decide or delegate, but never procrastinate. (D)
3. Support internally first, externally second. (C)
4. Communicate everything, and no secrets. (C)
5. The first priority = 80%,
the second = 20%, forget the others. (D)

CAVEAT: Like all words, the above are personal opinions based on a limited perspective. I have never been to a board meeting, or to an executive meeting, or to a Christmas Dance. Thus my observations are empirical rather than experiential.

CAVEAT II: I like this company. Refining the 30% does not imply that the 70% is rotten. I like that we are not in real business, and thus not in competition. I like the caliber of the staff, although I wonder why some of us are here. I like being more professional than the client. I like our office building. I like the hours. I like the freedom of expression. I like God, the flag, my wife, and sex.

CAVEAT III: Yes, everything is changing. Especially now.