



REBECCA BRADSHAW

MANAGERSHIP

SOLVING
THE PROBLEM OF THE MIDDLE



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Managership

THE HIERARCHY

The organisational hierarchy exists in many organisations and is one of several structures' organisations can adopt.

The hierarchy is one of the oldest organisation structures and there is a conversation we need to have about yours.....

There are quite possibly some poor souls being squashed in the middle of your triangle.

Organisation structure usually follows a similar pattern,

A Leader at the top, a group of executives charged with strategy, middle managers charged with delivering on the expectations of customers and stakeholders and a labour force who undertake the direct work.

Smaller organisations can often function effectively without a formal structure but in larger organisation as work is delegated and systems are developed it is common to create a hierarchy.

For those in the middle the pressure of competing demands can become overwhelming, with little control over their time and resources.



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THE PROBLEM WITH THE MIDDLE

The problem with a hierarchy is that there tends to be a group of people struggling in the middle.

We will call them middle managers, but they can have many names, Team Leaders, General Managers, Coordinators.

The thing they have in common is that they have someone to whom they report and have a team of people who report to them.

They are often technically competent and have been promoted to a management level position because of this technical competence.

The middle manager is often promoted internally within an organisation when they have displayed excellence in their field and a position becomes vacant.

The problems arise when the promotion means they are required to use a whole other set of skills for which they have received little or no training.

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THE CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM WITH THE MIDDLE

Many people are promoted into management positions with little understanding of the expectations of the organisation and little training in what it means to be a manager of people.

Moving from a technical position to a management position involves learning and using some very different skills, things like:

- Time management
- Productivity
- Prioritising
- Managing competing demands
- Managing up
- Having difficult conversations
- Providing feedback
- Delegating



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HOW THE PROBLEM WITH THE MIDDLE AFFECTS THE PEOPLE AT THE TOP

One of the biggest issues that arise from lack of training for middle managers is that they can quickly become overwhelmed and struggle to keep on top of their new workload.

This can impact on their managers who can be called in to fix errors or pick up the slack.



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JAMES STORY

James was promoted to team leader in a large disability services organisation in Melbourne. He had worked for the organisation for seven years and was an outstanding support worker.

When the opportunity arose for promotion, he was encouraged by his peers and the area manager to apply.

When I met him he was considering leaving the job he had been in for only four short months. I just keep messing up" was James explanation.

He explained that he was struggling with the paperwork and the people management. The reports were new to him and whilst he was managing to get them in on time, he was having to do them in his own time because they were taking so long.

The other problem was that he was losing control of the team, morale was low and poor behaviour was on the increase, people were gossiping and complaining about everything.

Where we are
TODAY



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JAMES STORY

When we unpacked it we recognised two problems, the first was that James was struggling to keep up with his workload because he didn't know how to delegate.

He was trying to do all of the things he used to do on top of the new tasks like the report writing.

He explained he felt people wouldn't want any more work and didn't want to upset an already unhappy team.

The second problem was that James was used to working with the team as a peer and was struggling to understand how to use his authority without alienating the team.

He was letting poor behaviour slide to avoid confrontation and difficult conversations.

The downside of this was twofold, James was overwhelmed and his manager was having to pick up the slack, which included performance managing his poor performers and chasing reports.



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FIXING THE PROBLEM WITH THE MIDDLE

The answer would seem to be to provide more training to the middle managers, but in my experience this alone does not work.

There are courses to teach people how to have difficult conversations or how to delegate but none of these addresses one simple fact:

The person has to want to lead.

Being a middle manager is about starting on the leadership journey.

It's about recognising that you are moving from a technical expert to a person charged with inspiring, motivating and leading a team.

Often in organisations we save leadership programs for people already in a senior role but that's like waiting until you are 18 to go to school.

When we place people in a position of middle manager we are actually placing them on the first rung of their leadership journey.

When we set out on a journey its useful (often vital) to have a map, lets not force the middle manager to map their own journey.



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THE SOLUTION

The Managership program is a program designed to transform not only practice but **mindset**.

The program provides practical sessions on delegation and having difficult conversations but these are embedded in a program that focuses on transforming the mindset of middle managers to understand and embrace their leadership potential.

The program provides a map for the journey to leadership.

Often new managers can be seen as problem finders, worrying about problems before they arise, and this is often a symptom of overwhelm and insecurity.

Teaching middle managers to become problem solvers promotes their autonomy and reduces their reliance on organisation leaders.

Supporting the middle manager to unleash their leadership potential isn't just the right thing to do its also financially smart.

Research shows that 58% of employees say poor management is the biggest thing getting in the way of productivity and when you consider that unhappy workers cost the U.S. between \$450 and \$550 billion in lost productivity each year^[1]

its easy to understand that investing in middle managers makes sense emotional and financially.

[1] <https://www.gallup.com/services/176708/state-american-workplace.aspx>

The Managership program focuses on three domains:

Self - learn the skills of:

- networking to build support and collaboration
- productivity to reduce reactive workdays
- self care - being the best you can be

Supports - building a team:

- linking with your team
- delegating with confidence
- having difficult conversations

Systems - design the right environment

- develop an AuditMindset across your team
- work within systems
- continuous improvement to drive outcomes

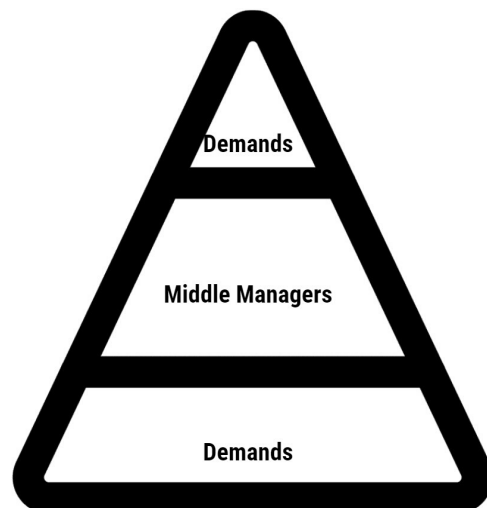
Each person also receives a Team Management Profile to help better understand how they prefer to work and how to get the most out of their team.

What people say

Great training that is engaging and insightful.

Today's content was great as I will be having difficult conversations with staff over the next few weeks.

Super helpful in shifting mindset - feeling optimistic!



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About Rebecca

Having worked in Quality for over 15 years I realise that no matter how important the systems the most significant improvement we can make is investing in our people.

I have worked with hundreds of organisations and seen first hand the importance of having leaders at all levels.

Its time to turn managers into leaders

Organisations are simply a group of people until managers with leadership skills build and lead engaged teams.

The middle is a place filled with experts in your organisation, keep them, grow them and they will pay dividends in the future of your business.

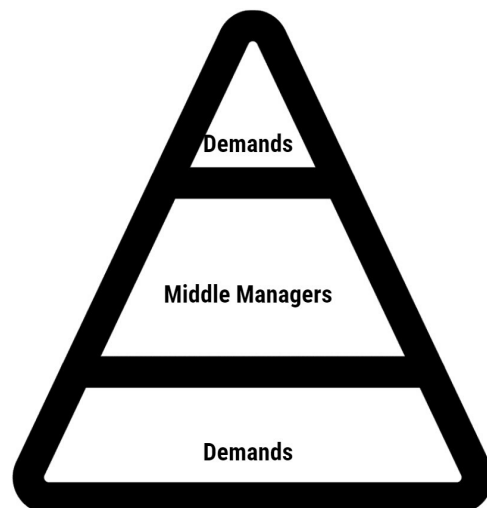
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