

## **CLIMBING THE PROCESS LADDER**

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### **The lot of the Senior Manager**

We've often wondered why many senior and executive managers work very long hours and micro-manage more than two levels down inside the organizations they are accountable for. We have seen divorce, burn-out, colossal errors of judgment, temperamental behaviours, all on behalf of "being a senior person". We have even heard senior people state that the hectic life they lead is the price of being at the top of the organizational pyramid.

### **Just a minute...**

At RANA, we're great proponents of the notion that, in the organizational pyramid (and let's face it folks, our organizations are pretty well all pyramids, with a few exceptions that prove the rule), the line person delivers the content to a level of 100% and the senior-most person manages processes 100% of the time with very little reference to the content of the organization. Supervisors and mid-managers have split personalities: a percentage of content, a percentage of process, depending on how high up they are in the organizational ladder. The most successful senior managers we've seen are those who have understood their process role completely, embraced it as a second career and motivated their people by being present and available as managerial models.

Even the gifted engineer who is kicked up to supervisor, manager and hence to the lofty ranks of the organization's executive needs to discard content along the way. Why, say you? Well, for one thing, our gifted engineer can't keep up to the trade while performing a management role. Secondly, the reason he's kicked upwards is generally wrong: if he's a gifted engineer, keep the talent where it belongs, i.e. in delivery, or else you may simply end up with a gifted engineer who's a really ineffective manager.

### **Learning the trade**

If we've learned anything over the years, it has to be that management is a whole different trade than delivering the product or service of the organization. The main concern is that not enough people who accede to the senior ranks take the time to learn their trade of manager. A secondary concern is that those who are teaching these good folks the trade have often only academic knowledge and have never managed anything except their own timetables. A third concern is that many senior managers don't have a clue that they are de facto models inside and often outside of their organizations. They behave badly and give a lot of permission to everyone around them to follow their lead. Being a manager is a set of measurable skills that one should acquire first and then, perfect constantly.

## **There is no try**

Yoda's injunction to Luke rings true: *"You do or do not; there is no try"*. We are beginning to see a new generation of managers who have paid their dues, know their roles, act transparently and behave as role models for those around them. We can only hope that they will set the standard for others coming behind them and that future managers will fully understand the importance of their accountabilities. Many individuals inside organizations are affected by management – good and bad. Isn't it wonderful when it's good?

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