



MANAGEMENT QUAGMIRE

Managers encounter difficulty transitioning into their roles.

By Juana Llorens

For employees who are promoted into management, many anticipate new avenues for professional growth and leadership. But an increasing number of managers—both new and experienced—report facing many obstacles when making a complete transition into management roles.

A five-year study conducted by ConceptReserve, a Colorado-based training company, reports that 86 percent of 2,600 managers have trouble moving beyond working as individual contributors and into management roles.

Although this issue is not a new one, the current increase demonstrates that the slow transition is at least three to four times worse than it was in the late 1990s. The reasons behind the snag are rooted in several obstacles as well as invalid assumptions held by managers about their success, their teams, and themselves.

Managers in the study differed greatly in terms of management experience. John Davis, CEO of ConceptReserve, says new managers composed 25 percent or less of the participants. Executives were excluded. Results indicated

Inside **Intelligence**:

Opportunities to volunteer help spur development	16
Stark contrast between women and men with executive aspirations	18
Fast fact on outsourcing/Top-level titles carrying less weight	20
New trends in coaching rates/Coaching skills gaining ground	21

five areas as major sources of frustration for managers.

By far the most difficult task was transitioning from doing work to managing and delegating work. The issue is not whether managers understand delegation techniques, but their inability to let go of their comfort and expertise. Many managers believe their jobs have in fact become two-fold—performing as well as overseeing the workload. Davis observes that often managers tend to “do” instead of manage.

“These are very competent individual contributors who got promoted. Now they’re in the manager ranks and they’re just trying to do a good job,” Davis says.

Some managers are uncomfortable taking on a leadership role among former colleagues. This becomes manifest when leaders must assign work, offer direction, and hold team members accountable.

Managers are also apprehensive when balancing their current roles with the skills and capabilities that earned them a promotion.

“They’ve got to leave their expertise behind, and learn how to deal with broader issues—the business, process, and relationship issues both at the group and the organizational levels,” Davis says.

Because many managers believe that their roles are double-sided, they have difficulty managing their time when faced with competing demands such as meetings and broader business issues on one hand and completing the work they handled previously on the other.

To become more effective, managers must learn to rely on their team members to complete tasks independently. This proved to be another rough transition for managers, and it is again rooted in their inability to let go and step away from day-to-day tasks.

To transition more effectively and overcome these obstacles, Davis asserts that managers need to shift their focus in terms of previous assumptions and the work that they do. To surmount the

FATAL ASSUMPTIONS

- Success as an individual contributor will translate into management success
- It’s out of my control—someone else can and should fix this
- Being the expert is the most important factor for my credibility
- It’s the rational and logical approach or solution that counts
- The people I manage are just like me in their thinking, expectations, goals, and priorities
- Competent people do not need help

Source: ConceptReserve (full whitepaper available; info@ConceptReserve.com)

roadblocks, it is important that those who are stuck rethink flawed assumptions and then adopt different approaches to their work.

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Davis cites five elements that are necessary to make a complete transition into management. First, managers need to make an accurate assessment of where they are in the transition process and how it relates to the team goals and the larger business.

Second, training should be utilized to help managers understand new approaches, the implications of past assumptions, and plans for changing behaviors. Third, managers should consistently apply this understanding to their work as soon as possible.

Fourth, while it is important for managers to adopt their own leadership style, they need to receive coaching along the way. Lastly, the assessment of a manager’s transition should be ongoing, to ensure that managers are progressing and to account for their steps toward accepting broader business and technical responsibilities.

Managers who begin to make this shift can achieve full transition, possibly within 12 months, as opposed to three to five years according to Davis. And the importance of assessing where they are and what is expected of them is an essential first step.

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The Hidden Classroom

As an incentive policy, asking employees to work for free is a dead end. But as a training opportunity, volunteerism offers great potential for development.

Unfortunately, few organizations take advantage of this hidden classroom, according to a recent survey.

New York-based consulting agency Deloitte asked leaders of human resources departments at Fortune 500 companies about their perspective regarding volunteerism as a training tool. While a majority of organizations acknowledged increasing demand to maintain the same level of training with the same or a reduced budget, very few identified volunteering as a potential source for building skills.

When asked how often they encourage employees to contribute to a not-for-profit, only 25 percent

of organizations said they always or frequently do so. Yet 90 percent of respondents either strongly or somewhat agree that contributing work to a not-for-profit can develop leadership skills.

"It's a missed opportunity in the learning and development field," says Susan Burnett, national director of talent development at Deloitte Services. "When we asked people about volunteerism in the survey, they all agreed it was a good idea, but nobody's doing anything about it. They have no strategy to do it."

When participants were asked whether working with a not-for-profit organization was considered as an option for skill development, 43 percent said rarely or never. Only 15 percent said always or frequently.

For Deloitte, one opportunity is to prepare tax returns for individuals or entities who cannot afford to pay for

the services. Other programs have little to do with tax statements. The agency recently organized an "alternative spring break" for college students who helped rebuild homes in areas damaged by Hurricane Katrina. The company is planning to offer more such opportunities that can be made available as ongoing development initiatives instead of single programs.

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While learning professionals may not fully realize it, volunteerism encompasses all of the elements of learning, including teamwork, motivating others, and problem solving, according to Burnett. It can be designed as an action learning initiative. At the conclusion of the work, an evaluation can be conducted, with the volunteer organization grading the performance of the participants.

Volunteer programs are especially appealing to Generation Y individuals who are seeking to make a social contribution beyond the workday.

"We hire a lot of college graduates, and they are more interested in the outside world than their predecessors," Burnett says. "They want it to be relevant to their career and their outside interests."

Michael Laff is senior associate editor at T+D; mlaff@astd.org.

Gender Imbalance

Many studies attempt to explain the lack of women in senior management, but few ask whether reaching the executive suite is the ultimate goal of ambitious women.

A recent study by Hudson Recruitment and Talent Management revealed scant difference between women and men in terms of a desire for promotion. They are often running the same race, but on different tracks.

“When you ask women about their aspirations, they don’t talk about the C-level as much as the director or vice president level,” says Robert Morgan, co-president of Hudson. “Women want to reach the top, but they view the top of an organization differently than men.”

Since the 1980s, the number of women holding managerial and professional positions has doubled, but the number of women working in corporate officer positions at Fortune 500 companies is stagnant, hovering between 15 and 16 percent in recent years, according to the Hudson study.

The research highlights notable contrasts between the sexes. Men indicated that they prefer the trappings of a job—salary, title, and prestige—while women focused on having interesting and meaningful work. As women become older, their interest in attaining executive positions tails off.

During interviews with survey participants, several women mentioned the positive influence male mentors provided during their careers. Given the fear surrounding personal relationships in an office, Morgan says organizations are extremely shy about encouraging such partnerships.

“It comes up in conversations,” Morgan says of consultations with clients. “I ask them, ‘How are you going to integrate

them and promote them if you’re paranoid?’”

Few analysts are able to pinpoint why male and female leaders are viewed differently, but Morgan and others indicated that promising women executives are often unfairly targeted for harsh criticism by their peers.

“Female executives are often the harshest on other female executives,” Morgan says. “Some of them believe that because they worked so hard to get there, no one else deserves it unless they went through the same obstacles.”

Morgan compares the phenomenon to physicians who refuse to call for an end to 48-hour shifts for interns because they had to go through the same process.

Some organizations are attempting to reverse the gender imbalance. Morgan mentioned Deloitte, Ernst & Young, Federal Express, Avon, and Hewlett-Packard as examples of organizations with model initiatives to identify women leaders and promote them from within.

Michael Laff

What is the highest position you would like to attain?

Men—31 percent say vice president

Women—22 percent say director

Does your company have a program to develop women for executive positions?

Women—21 percent say yes

Do you aspire to a senior executive position?

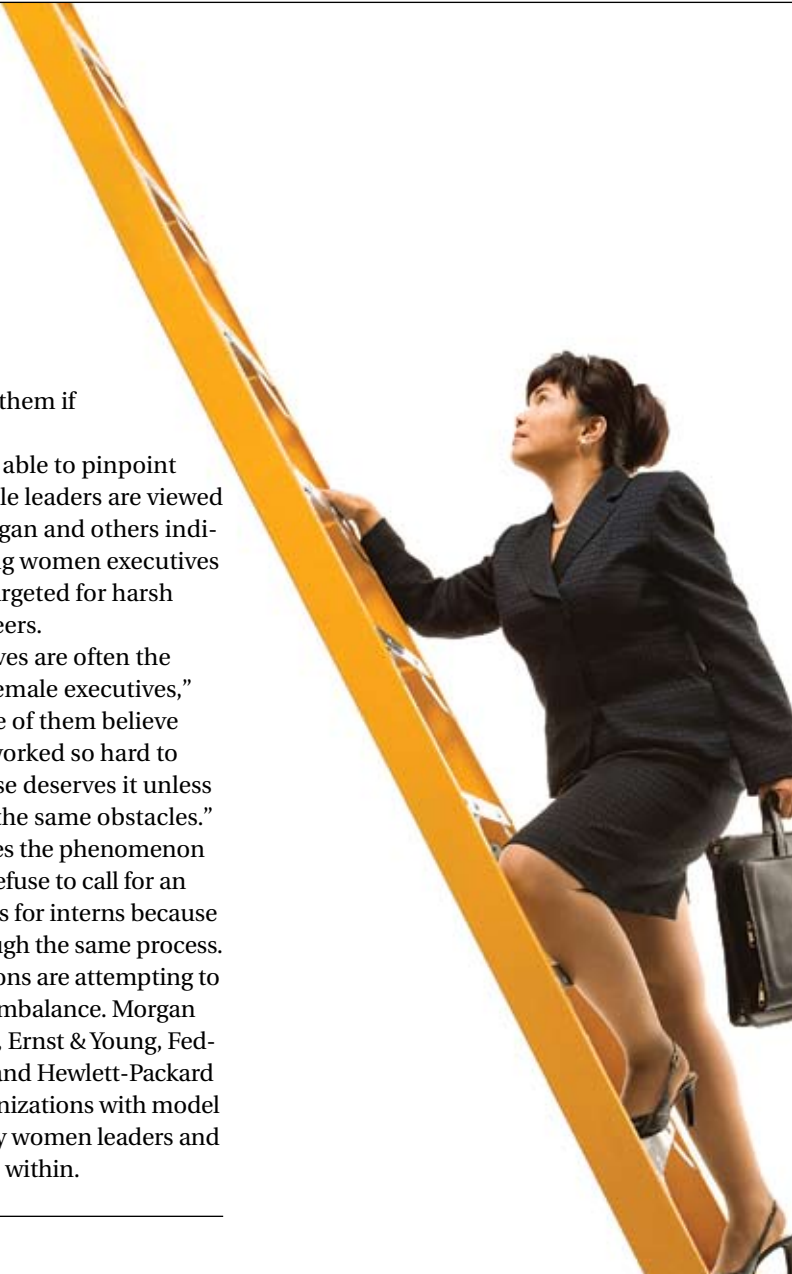
Women by age:

25-34 years89 percent

35-44 years75 percent

45-54 years58 percent

Source: Hudson Recruitment and Talent Management



// FAST FACT //

Outsourcing's Ascendance

The International Association of Outsourcing Professionals released a report titled "Career Mapping for Outsourcing Professionals" that found that outsourcing professionals require knowledge in team leadership, global delivery experience, and relationship management skills.

The association estimates that 150,000 professionals work in outsourcing as providers, advisors, or users of outsourcing services. Among the new titles emerging to define these positions are global sourcing manager, director of strategic sourcing, strategic relationship manager, solutions consultant, director of IT synergies, and chief globalization officer.

The association, which sets professional standards and advocates for the industry, expects that by 2010, outsourcing will be one of the most coveted and highly rewarded occupations. Scant information is available about the skills, job profiles, career paths, and compensation levels for individuals in this emerging field.

Positions in the sector range from entry-level analysts with a background in human resources or finance, managers possessing project planning experience, directors who manage large client projects, and vice presidents who serve as the global leads for multiple initiatives.

To view the report visit www.outsourcingprofessional.org.

// TRENDS //



**BEWARE OF
TITLE CREEP**

Fancy titles look impressive on a business card, but being a director or a vice president no longer carries the same cache as it did in the past.

As recently as a decade ago, the title vice president denoted singular authority over hiring and firing, setting budgets, and establishing strategic direction for an entire department. Not so anymore.

"You can no longer take that as a given," says Michael Jalbert, president of Philadelphia-based Management Recruiters International, a recruiting firm. "Titles are currency to attract talent, but they often cloud what the real job functions are."

This subtle form of inflation is occurring in the workplace whereby employers bestow lofty titles on their staff without a corresponding level of authority. "Title creep," as Jalbert likes to call it, occurs in every sector from banking to consumer products.

Candidates reviewing job offers should conduct as much research as possible before taking a position that promises greater authority, he says. They should speak to the hiring manager, colleagues, and even customers to find out who has decision-making authority and whether the organization is easy to work with.

Beyond rewarding loyalty or performance, title inflation is a device used to a recruiter's advantage.

Jalbert worked with a candidate in marketing who weighed competing offers from two organizations. Each company offered a position at the director level. To sweeten the offer, one organization raised the ante to vice president, but Jalbert says the kind of responsibility included in the position clearly suggested title inflation. As expected, the candidate chose the position with the higher title.

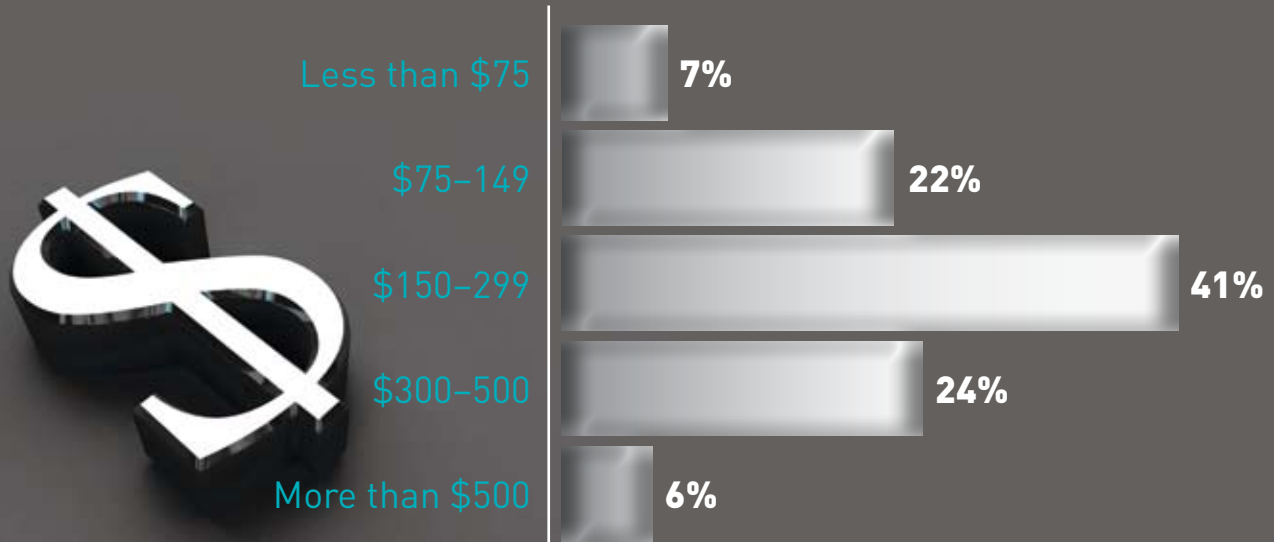
"The caution for the company is that if you water down the position, you dilute your own criteria for what makes a successful performer in that role," he says.

A promise of greater authority can backfire as some candidates discover. Jalbert recalls another colleague in the travel sector who worked as a regional vice president. In what appeared to be a promotion, a cruise line offered him a position at the executive vice president level. After 60 days, the candidate realized he made a mistake. The level of authority was oversold because the president of the company made all the decisions. To make matters worse, it was too late to return to his former position.

"Don't become infatuated with the title," Jalbert says. "Dig deeper to find out if it's for real."

Michael Laff

On average, I charge an **hourly rate** for business coaching of



Source: Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey

// SKILLS UPDATE //

COACHING GAINS GROUND

While many training professionals consider coaching skills to be strategic tools in employee development, a recent study shows that top leadership development initiatives apply coaching techniques to daily performance-related, operational tasks.

Novations Group, a Boston-based consulting organization, conducted an online survey of 2,556 senior human resources and training and development executives. The survey asked, “Which of the following management situations or initiatives are addressed by your organization’s leadership development program?”

The top initiatives were coaching a performance problem (72 percent), communicating performance standards (69 percent), coaching a development opportunity (69 percent), and conducting a performance appraisal (67 percent).

Novations president and CEO Mike Hyter noted that it is disappointing how little emphasis leadership development programs place on strategic initiatives.

“At the very core of developing new leaders is getting people to look beyond the tactical stuff and to engage on the bigger issues,” he says.

So why is performance such a high priority?

Besides the obvious answer that dealing with daily operational issues is integral to what managers do, several factors contribute to the emphasis on performance. Michelle Knox, executive consultant and lead coach at Novations, explains that the workforce today is comprised of multiple generations, and diversity creates a variety of challenges

for many managers regarding performance expectations, standards, and evaluation.

In addition, organizations indicated that employee engagement is lacking. Disengagement affects workforce performance as not everyone sees the same opportunities to learn and grow.

A total of 55 percent of respondents consider diversity and inclusion part of leadership development. Hyter said that he was encouraged by this statistic.

“For more than a decade, there’s been a growing understanding that inclusion isn’t so much about percentages as it is opening up the process so that everyone in the organization gets a chance to learn and achieve,” he says.

In light of the survey results, leadership development programs are primed for workplace learning and performance expertise. In particular, coaching skills are in demand. Two of the top three survey responses included coaching-related initiatives.

While the survey’s definition of coaching implies an interaction between a manager and a direct report, industry experts can leverage coaching initiatives to increase an organization’s focus on the strategic dimension.

As leaders foster a coaching culture focused on employees coaching each other, performance and strategy alignment is encouraged. In addition, as executives develop their coaching expertise, a shift toward key strategic skills, such as communicating vision and delegating responsibility, becomes more natural.

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