

Show a sensitive side after your first promotion

Delivering results is no longer enough for junior managers

On the way up

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Who cares wins — no more referring to a new caring slogan for the SAS, but rather a maxim for successful managers. At least that's the finding of a study conducted by business psychologist Kaisen Consulting.

The survey sought to see if there were differences between managers who succeeded and those who flopped. Researchers at Kaisen analysed the psychometric test results of 101 managers from a wide range of sectors and nationalities who were on their database.

"We carried out the research because there are many theories as to which personality traits or skills are possessed by those who make it to the top but these are based on anecdotal evidence. Also when assessing performance, a great deal of subjectivity can be involved," says Gwyn Rogers, a director at Kaisen. "We wanted to be wholly objective and to avoid subjective views clouding the perception of success."

The 101 managers were divided into two groups. The first group included those managers who had a clear evidence of a track record of success in one job after another. The second group consisted of managers where there was clear evidence of not having succeeded in some respect — for example, moved out of a role prematurely for negative reasons," explains Gwyn. The psychometric tests of the two groups were compared and the results showed that the successful managers did indeed share certain common traits.

"The results showed that senior managers who had a track record of success were emotionally stable, more positive and optimistic about people, have a strong sense of duty and, significantly, were warmer to people and sensitive to and aware of the needs of others."

"These are often referred to as 'soft skills', but I don't like that phrase because I believe these attributes to be just as important as analytical and reasoning skills," says Gwyn.

So what does this mean for the hungry junior manager keen to make his or her mark and not only reach the top but stay there? Is empathy and showing your sensitive side essential to get ahead? Well, it would be wrong to draw too many firm conclusions from this study but according to Gwyn: "Working hard and delivering are still important but they are not enough. It may have been enough 10 or 15 years ago but today the ability to get on with people and earn respect from those above and below you is important. There is a lot of truth in the adage 'Be nice to people on the way up, because you don't know who you'll meet on the way down.'"

So, how can young managers make sure they use their sensitive side to reach the summit and pitch their tent there?

- Develop what Ben Williams, an Edinburgh-based corporate psychologist, refers to as "relationship behaviour" — that is, showing an interest not only in your colleague's work but also their personal life. Making disclosures about yourself will help you gain people's trust.
- People have different needs and motivations — therefore finding out



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colleagues, whatever their position try and empathise with their situation. While this won't necessarily resolve the disagreement, being able to view the situation from their point of view will help you be more objective and sensitive to their opinion. "Empathy and being sensitive to the needs of fellow workers, whether they are your manager, peers or juniors, is essential for

young managers who want to get on," explains Gwyn Rogers. "The 'millennium manager' needs to balance their drive and ambition with a warmer view towards people. They must also ensure that they are developing positive relationships and managing their reputation."

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