

SERVING AS AN EFFECTIVE MIDDLE MANAGER

Presentation for the 2011 AACRAO
Annual Conference

Presented by: Dr. Nicole Rovig
University Registrar
Michigan State University

Session ID: 220

OVERVIEW

- ▶ Defining middle management
- ▶ Role issues: employee's vs. supervisor's expectations
- ▶ Achieving greatness through effective leadership and management
- ▶ Professional growth and career advancement
- ▶ Work/Life balance

DEFINING MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

Middle managers

- ▶ link horizontal and vertical levels (Young, 1990)
- ▶ interact with diverse constituencies
- ▶ are the “unsung heroes” who keep the daily operations of the institution running smoothly (White, Webb & Young, 1990, p. 56)
- ▶ “have your fingers on the campus pulse and are able to interpret the heartbeats you receive” (Bryan & Mullendore, 1990, p. 110)
- ▶ manage people, programs, projects, and information. (Mills, 2000)
- ▶ typically do not create policy – rather, interprets and implements (Mills, 2000)
- ▶ make decisions; also implement decisions from a higher level
- ▶ may have significant role with implementing technology and strategic planning

KNOW YOUR ROLE!

- ▶ Meeting employee's and supervisor's expectations
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Time and priorities
- ▶ What decisions can the middle manager make and when must approval be sought?
- ▶ Must be able to accomplish goals by working through others (Mills, 2000)
- ▶ Being an effective leader and manager is the foundation for success
- ▶ You don't have to be *the* leader in order to be *a* leader

ACHIEVING GREATNESS THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

“The charisma of leadership becomes a lifelong process of discerning how a person can be of service to the academic community and profession while carrying out the tasks and responsibilities of the leadership position”

(Dr. Ronald Rebores, 2001, p. 65).

- ▶ Characteristics of the ideal boss
- ▶ Decision making
- ▶ Overcoming obstacles
- ▶ Getting things done
- ▶ Life-long learning

THE IDEAL BOSS

- ▶ Willing to provide constructive criticism
- ▶ Friendly, caring, and understanding
- ▶ Available for questions; accessible
- ▶ Say what you do; do what you say
- ▶ Competent and hard working
- ▶ Knows his/her employees
- ▶ Tolerance for ambiguity (Birnbaum, 1988)
- ▶ Consistently demonstrates excellent supervisory skills
- ▶ Practices cybernetic leadership (Birnbaum, 1988)

CYBERNETIC LEADERSHIP (BIRNBAUM, 1988)

- ▶ When facing undesirable behavior, ask “what am I doing that may be influencing what is happening?” (p. 210)
- ▶ Upon encountering a problem ask “what is within my power to do to solve this problem that will not create more serious problems in the future?” (p. 211)
- ▶ Problems should be addressed through the organization’s existing structures and processes
- ▶ Achieves status by being able to sincerely articulate the unspoken concerns of others
- ▶ Encourages open communication **and listens**

DECISION MAKING

- ▶ Make decisions timely
 - ▶ Reduce the clutter
 - ▶ Time for reflecting and planning
- ▶ Understand your role as middle manager
- ▶ Think about the impact...who, what, and when
- ▶ Stay within the scope of your mission
- ▶ Do the right thing
- ▶ Do what is best for the office, department, and institution
- ▶ Communicate: before, during and after

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

- ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Share as much information as possible
 - ▶ Timing, layers, and methods for dissemination
 - ▶ Be proactive in keeping yourself informed
- ▶ Listen to constituencies and demonstrate through action
- ▶ Set, communicate and enforce performance expectations; provide feedback
- ▶ Manage change
- ▶ Acknowledge and understand culture
- ▶ Get the right people on the bus (Collins, 2001)
- ▶ Create a pocket of greatness (Collins, 2001)

GETTING THINGS DONE: TIME MANAGEMENT

- If you could have more time, in the work week what would you do?
- Ask yourself: “am I the only person who can do this task?”
- Effectively delegate
- Calendars and scheduling
- Processing time
- Block time for thinking, planning and completing projects
- Pickle jar theory (Wright, 2002)
- Handling items one time
- Reducing distractions and brain clutter

GETTING THINGS DONE

- ▶ Most Valuable Activities (Crenshaw, 2010)
- ▶ Build on strengths; what makes you feel strong (Rath & Conchie, 2008)
- ▶ Learn to say no; develop a stop doing list (Collins, 2001)
- ▶ Identify small changes that can have a large impact (Birnbaum, 1988)
- ▶ Give credit where credit is due
- ▶ Keep it simple
- ▶ Create alliances; know the power people

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

“To deny ample professional development opportunities to you would gradually, if not quickly, diminish the capacity and effectiveness of your...division and your institution.” (Young, 1990, p. 110)

- ▶ Foster an environment supportive of professional growth/development
- ▶ Lead by example: engage in professional development opportunities
- ▶ Seek mentoring; be a mentor
- ▶ Develop peer relationships
- ▶ Become involved in professional organizations
- ▶ View higher education through multiple lenses (Birnbaum, 1988)

ACHIEVING GREATNESS THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The guiding principle among all of these categories:

- ▶ Characteristics of the ideal boss
- ▶ Decision making
- ▶ Overcoming obstacles
- ▶ Getting things done
- ▶ Life-long learning

Encourage, empower, and inspire others!

(Morrill, 2007)

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT

- ▶ Keep your resume up-to-date
- ▶ Demonstrate your ability to learn, grow and develop
 - ▶ Track your professional development activities; apply what you learn; share your knowledge with others
 - ▶ Create a system to stay organized
 - ▶ Take note of references used
- ▶ Identify accomplishments: how have you made your organization better than it was before? How have you contributed to the profession?
 - ▶ An “accomplishments” section of a resume is a must; identify the strongest, most objective accomplishments that have had the greatest impact.
- ▶ Build and maintain peer relationships

DESIRED SKILLS , KNOWLEDGE AND OTHER QUALITIES

- ▶ Low maintenance
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Professionalism
- ▶ Ability to gather, interpret, and synthesize large amounts of information and complex issues
- ▶ Use of data
- ▶ Keep the boss well informed

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

- ▶ Take care of yourself
 - ▶ Eat healthy
 - ▶ Exercise
 - ▶ Sleep and rest
 - ▶ Emotional, spiritual, financial, and social wellness
 - ▶ Recognize signs of stress
 - ▶ Make time for yourself
- ▶ Choose how you spend your time; establish your priorities
- ▶ Find a trustworthy colleague
- ▶ You only have one life
- ▶ Have fun. Enjoy life. Take risks. Stretch outside of your comfort zone.

TIME TO REFLECT

- ▶ Consider all the areas we just covered
- ▶ Identify one area; focus on this area during the upcoming month, semester or year
- ▶ Identify a broad goal for that area and create an action plan
- ▶ After making progress and can maintain, then switch focus to another area
- ▶ Keep building, creating a continuous loop

FINAL THOUGHT

“You might stumble, you might fall. Just do your best and forget the rest!”

(Tony Horton, P90X, 2008)

REFERENCES

- ▶ Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- ▶ Bryan, W. A. & Mullendore, R. H. (1990). Professional development strategies. In R. B. Young (Ed.), *The invisible leaders student affairs mid-managers* (p. 110). Washington, D.C.: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Inc.
- ▶ Collins, J. (2001). *Good to Great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. New York: HarperBusiness.
- ▶ Crenshaw, D. (2010). *Invaluable: The secret to becoming irreplaceable*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- ▶ Farr, N., & Bendewald, D. M. (Director). Horton, T. (Narrator). (2008). *P90X: Extreme home fitness* [Motion picture]. Beverly Hills: Beachbody.
- ▶ Mills, D. B. (2000). The role of the middle manager. In M. J. Barr, M. K. Desler, & Associates, *The handbook of student affairs administration* (pp. 597-611). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- ▶ Morrill, R. L. (2007). *Strategic leadership: Integrating strategy and leadership in colleges and universities*. Westport, CT: American Council on Education.
- ▶ Rath, T. & Conchie B. (2008). *Strengths based leadership*. New York: Gallup Press.
- ▶ Rebores, R. (2001). *The ethics of education leadership*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- ▶ White, Webb, & Young (1990). Press and stress: A comparative study of institutional factors affecting the work of mid-managers. In R. B. Young (Ed.), *The invisible leaders student affairs mid-managers* (pp. 56). Washington, D.C.: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Inc.
- ▶ Wright, J. (2002; June). Time management: The pickle jar theory. *A List Apart*, 146, 1-5.
- ▶ Young, R. B. (Ed.). (1990). *The invisible leaders student affairs mid-managers*. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Inc.

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Session ID: 220

Nicole Rovig

University Registrar

Michigan State University

Rovig@msu.edu

(517) 355-8700

